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DIGITAL
EDITION

TOMB RAIDER: WE'VE PLAYED IT

PLAY



ISSUE NO 226
STILL IN A DREAM

101 MIND-BLOWING FACTS

Grand Theft Auto V

11-PAGE SPECIAL



2013

MASSIVE
PREVIEW

MGS: GROUND ZEROES

Snake's final PS3
adventure

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CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS DECLASSIFIED
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800+
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78 Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two PS3

It takes more than two, as it turns out. This platformer disappoints.

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A storytelling revolutionary or silly novelty? We'll tell you.

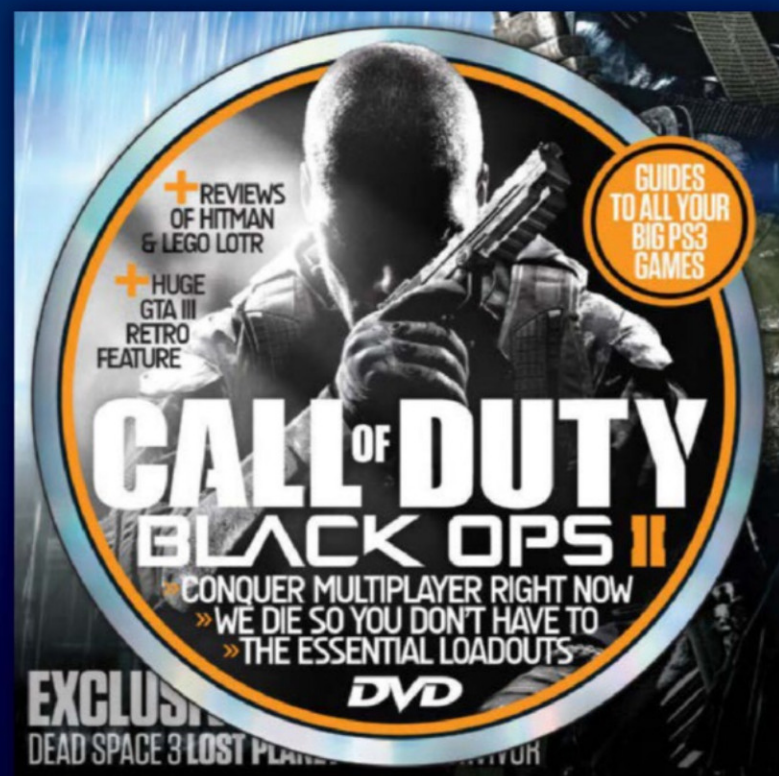


81 Zone Of The Enders HD Collection PS3

Two classic mech titles return in HD.

82 F1 Race Stars PS3

A karting game that isn't very good.



EXCLUSIVELY ON YOUR DISC



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II

All the tips you need for the perfect loadout in *Call Of Duty*, whether you're a defensive player, an offensive player, or just a loser.

GTA III RETROSPECTIVE

Hey, it's everyone's favourite sandbox revolution on PS2 revisited 11 years on. It's still an amazing piece of work by Rockstar Games.



HITMAN: ABSOLUTION

Video review and guide to *Hitman's* latest sequel. Well, we say guide, but we basically just die a lot and laugh loudly at ourselves.

LBP KARTING

Watch us dick around in Sackboy's little world of karting. We show you how to be an *LBP Karting* pro (that is, we tell you to hold down the accelerate button).



SEE THE BACK PAGE FOR MORE!

101 Mind-blowing Facts about

Grand Theft auto

A stylized logo for Grand Theft Auto V. It features a large, green, textured letter 'V' with a white outline. A white banner with a black border is draped across the middle of the 'V', containing the word 'FIVE' in a black, serif, all-caps font.

FINALLY, WE KNOW LOADS MORE ABOUT ROCKSTAR'S
UPCOMING SEQUEL, WHICH IS SET TO BE THE BIGGEST
GAME IT'S EVER CREATED. HERE'S EVERYTHING WE'VE LEARNED
ABOUT GTA V SO FAR — **IT COULD BE THE PS3'S DEFINING GAME...**



WIND-BLOWING FACTS

THE MASSIVE CITY IS BIGGER THAN SAN ANDREAS, LIBERTY CITY AND RED DEAD REDEMPTION COMBINED

Let's get this out of the way first, since it's the most exciting fact about *GTA V*. When taking into account all interior and exterior locations, Los Santos is larger than five *Red Dead Redemption* maps put together. Just think: we would've been happy with a map that's as big as the PS2's *San Andreas*. Now we have something many sizes bigger to play around in. We wonder how that ranks next to *Assassin's Creed III*?

2 IT'S ON PS3 FOR A REASON

Rockstar wanted to replicate the success it had with *San Andreas* at the end of the PS2's lifespan, and that's what *GTA V* represents: the very best of what the PS3 can achieve now that Rockstar understands its own tech so well.



✖ Sights like this remind us of being in the *Red Dead* wild.

3 LESS MINIGAMES, BETTER QUALITY

Rockstar would rather have a few decent minigames you can lose hours to rather than, say, ten that aren't that interesting. Hence why *GTA V* will follow *Red Dead*'s example of having a few highly addictive asides – although, to be honest, we were big fans of darts and bowling in *GTA IV*.

Activities

SO MUCH TO DISTRACT YOURSELF WITH, BUT WHAT TO DO FIRST...?

PARACHUTING

4 Brought back in with *The Ballad Of Gay Tony*, parachuting will be a key part of *GTA V* now that airplanes are fully controllable again. With Trevor's speciality being flight, it shouldn't take too long to get hold of one. Fingers crossed, anyway...

TENNIS

5 Tennis should strike a nice balance between light time-killing and in-depth gameplay – don't expect *Virtua Tennis*, but Rockstar doesn't do things by half.

RACING

6 It's a staple of every entry in the series to date, so racing is undoubtedly going to take advantage of improved driving mechanics. Dirt bike racing has been confirmed.

SCUBA DIVING

7 The ocean floor isn't just a cosmetic thing, it seems. Pop on some scuba gear and go down there – you're likely to bump into some sea life. It's a big part of the world.

BASE JUMPING

8 Again, a product of the *Episodes From Liberty City* DLC, that saw BASE jumping reinstated with quite a nice score attack system. We look forward to a fuller version of it in this larger environment, hopefully with leaderboards.

TRIATHLON

9 The triathlon from *San Andreas* returns – in that, players had to swim, cycle and sprint, so we'll be intrigued to see exactly how that has implemented here.

'ENTERTAINMENT'

10 What this will entail outside of the usual activities will likely fall in the ballpark of *GTA IV*'s world-enhancing magic shows and stand-up comedy (like Frankie Boyle in *The Ballad Of Gay Tony*) or the QTE dance-offs. It's based on Los Angeles, after all – there's got to be something fun in that subject matter.

GOLF

11 It's not like the caged golf from *Episodes From Liberty City*, as this time you have an entire 18-hole course to play around in order to perfect your skills.

YOGA

12 We're not sure how this will work exactly, but depending on the character, a yoga minigame will likely result in a few laughs.



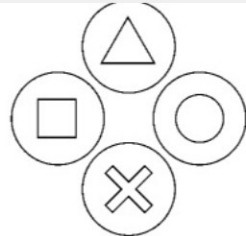
✖ Bikes were always great fun in *San Andreas*.



✖ *Just Cause* didn't do it first, you know.



✖ Tennis forms a cornerstone of the game's activities.



THREE PLAYABLE CHARACTERS

13 And their stories intersect. Between Trevor, Franklin and Michael (more on them later), you have three extremely diverse characters in personality and skillset – this is the first time *GTA* has given the player the opportunity to play as multiple protagonists across one campaign.

SWITCH BETWEEN CHARACTERS AT ALMOST ANY TIME

14 Any time out of a mission, you can switch across the map and take up another character's role. Depending on where they are based, this will affect the type of experience you have. You can switch in some instances during missions, too.



THE THREE ROLES YOU'LL BE TAKING UP IN LOS SANTOS – GET TO KNOW THESE GUYS. YOU'LL BE SEEING THEM A LOT...



Franklin

FRANKLIN IS A HUSTLER

15 Franklin is a hustler and the youngest of the three protagonists. He's a little muddled as to the direction of his life, as many people in their mid-twenties are; he's a bit out of time as a criminal, and has been working as a repo man.

A FASHIONABLE CHAP

16 Unlike Michael and Trevor, Franklin evidently keeps an eye on his appearance, wearing more fashionable clothes than a filthy vest or a suit, no doubt a reflection of his age compared to the other two men.

HAS A LIFE OF CRIME

17 Living a similar lifestyle to Franklin comes Lamar, his crazier pal. Both characters are trying to make it in the gangster business, and are cut from the same cloth in some ways.



Michael

HE'S THE GUY FROM THAT TRAILER

18 You heard him – about 100 times, to the point of wanting to kill yourself in our case. We must've endured "Why did I move here?" more times than anyone else in the world. Michael is in his early forties.

FORMER BANK ROBBER IN WITNESS PROTECTION

19 Michael struck a deal with the FIB, and lives a life with waning wealth in Rockford Hills with his family. Him and Trevor go way back as bank robbers – naturally, his old lifestyle starts to pull him back in.

HIS WIFE AND KIDS HATE HIM

20 Michael doesn't connect well with his overpampered kids, and his wife is a total bitch. If we were in his situation, we might get pulled back into a life of crime as well. His son, Jimmy, reminds us of Bobby from *King Of The Hill*.



Trevor

HE'S THE CRAZY CHAP

21 Every *GTA* needs a loose cannon, and for once you'll get to play as one. Trevor is the angry guy in *GTA V* who will tackle situations without the necessary subtlety. He has a best pal: conspiracy theory maniac Ron.

FLIGHT SPECIALIST

22 He'll get you access to aircraft fairly quickly in the game, since he's a former pilot. That means you can dick about in the Los Santos skies, which let's face it, is the main incentive during a playthrough of any *GTA* game.

LIVES AS HE PLEASES

23 Trev basically gives the finger to restraint, choosing to live his life as nastily as possible. A libertarian, then? We guess so. Trevor's a free criminal, and as such likes to party and take drugs, unmoved by the idea of an ordinary life.

Locations

WITH SO MANY PLACES TO GO, THE SHEER SCALE OF GTA V IS GIVING US ALL KINDS OF HAPPY GAMING FEELINGS

ROCKFORD HILLS BEVERLY HILLS

24 The place where all the entitled rich people roost, including Michael and his family. There was a place a bit like it in *San Andreas: Rodeo*.

MOUNT CHILIAD MOUNT DIABLO

25 Previously known as the largest object ever in a *GTA* world with *San Andreas*, Mount Chiliad returns in *GTA V*, and you can climb it to the very top. Hurrah!

BLAINE COUNTY SAULTON SEA

26 This is where Trevor lives, and it has an air of small-town trailer park – the sort of thing you'll remember from Bone County in *San Andreas*.

THE GOLF COURSE LA COUNTRY CLUB

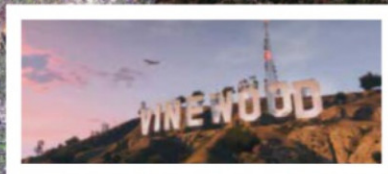
27 Where the rich go to have fun and hit balls around. We can only imagine how high the membership fees are.

VINEWOOD HOLLYWOOD

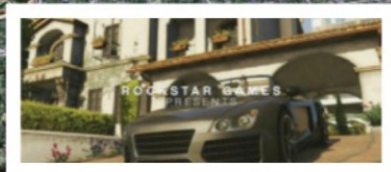
28 The home of cinema, complete with the iconic sign. It's a little grotty in real life, and you really wouldn't want to live there, like an American Bognor Regis.

DOWNTOWN LOS SANTOS DOWNTOWN LA

29 Surprisingly boring and shop-free in reality, there's nothing to do downtown (*Family Guy* even made a joke about it). We're sure Rockstar will provide a rather more interesting interpretation of it...



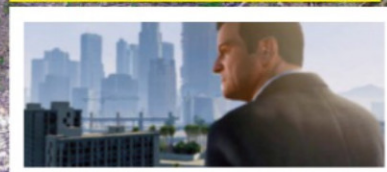
VINEWOOD



ROCKFORD HILLS



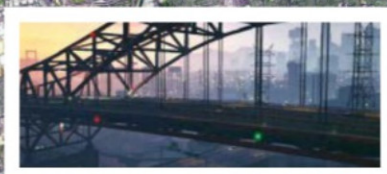
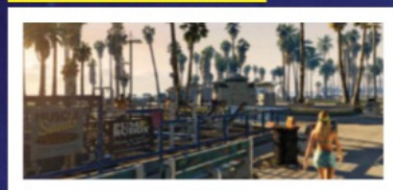
DOWNTOWN LOS SANTOS



THE GOLF COURSE



VESPUCCI BEACH



BRIDGE IN LOS SANTOS

30 LOS SANTOS IS THE ONE MAIN CITY

Rockstar would rather do one city incredibly well than do the "sketches" of cities seen in *San Andreas*, where the flavour of Los Angeles, San Francisco and Las Vegas were captured in bite-sized yet beautiful chunks. That doesn't mean there's no variety in Los Santos, however, as it's surrounded by an immense countryside.

SOME BRIDGE IN LOS SANTOS GERALD DESMOND BRIDGE

31 Rockstar likes to replicate key landmarks and their complex construction, and this structure, seen in trailer two, is an obvious homage to the Gerald Desmond Bridge in Long Beach.

LOS SANTOS FREEWAY LOS ANGELES FREEWAY

32 Again, we've been to the actual place – back when *Play* visited Treyarch for *Call Of Duty* in 2008. The freeway is a near-infinite road that connects the different parts of LA, and presumably the Los Santos equivalent will do the same.

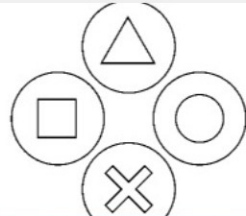
VESPUCCI BEACH SANTA MONICA

33 You'll remember this from the trailer – it's a little like the real-life Venice Beach, which is full of assholes, but the town of Santa Monica itself is rather lovely.

WINE COUNTRY ER... WINE COUNTRY, CALIFORNIA

34 Endless grape fields, where rich people go to sample the wines. Have you seen the episode of *The OC* from Season Two where the mum goes vino-tasting? Or maybe the film *Sideways*? No? Anyway. That place.

101 MIND-BLOWING FACTS



Go anywhere, do anything. The series' appeal never wavers.



EXPLORE THE OCEAN FLOOR

35 Returning from *San Andreas* is the ability to swim around any patch of water, after *GTA IV* teased us with all that gorgeous, shiny water you could only explore the surface of. Here, you can go diving in caves and generally just arse about in the deep seas, hopefully finding cool secrets like the literal easter egg in *Vice City*, or better yet, the pirate ship in *Bully*.

ECONOMY TO SPEND MONEY ON

36 Specifics haven't been revealed, but Rockstar acknowledges there wasn't a lot to do with your cash at the climax of *GTA IV* – a 'vibrant and fun' economy is promised, presumably some silly nonsense to splash your cash on that enhances the end part of your *GTA V* love affair.



RAPPEL DOWN BUILDINGS

37 That's new! You've seen it in loads of games before – *Kane & Lynch* did it well, weirdly – but you can now rappel down skyscrapers in *GTA V*, just in case you thought Rockstar needed another way to show off how impressive its open world technology is.

RED DEAD-STYLE DYNAMIC EVENTS

38 Picking up hitchhikers, broken-down cars, muggers, raiding security vans or finding a suspicious number of bodies in the desert are all parts of *GTA V*'s DNA now. Thank *Red Dead* for that. You'll never run out of things to do.

ACCESS THE INTERNET THROUGH THE PHONE

39 Remember your trusty phone in *GTA IV*, which by current technology standards now seems massively out of date? That's being updated for *GTA V*, and will hopefully reduce the amount of trips you have to make to internet cafes to use a computer (that's if internet cafes even make the cut).

HEIST-TYPE MISSIONS A HUGE FOCUS

40 Rockstar reckons these represent the pinnacle of the *GTA* experience, and history proves them right: Three-Leaf Clover is the template they're dealing with for the ideal mission in this series, the kind of experience that will lend itself really well to the character-switching mechanic. Expect to see a lot of increasingly creative *Heat*-style heists, then.



CHANGING NPC REACTIONS

41 Depending on the NPC, they'll react differently in an advanced fashion. We saw a bit of this in *GTA IV*, but with even more diverse regions and therefore sets of people, expect this to influence the sandbox experience even more.

FRIENDS WON'T CALL YOU EVERY TEN MINUTES

42 Did you ever tire of Roman wanting to get drunk with you, or Little Jacob wanting to play darts? You won't be dealing with that in *GTA V*, apparently, even if the phone is still a key part of the game.

RADIO STATIONS

43 Of course they'll be back. Rockstar spent well over \$10,000 a track licensing the 214 songs for *GTA IV*, and given that the game is many sizes bigger than that, you can expect even more this time around. So far the only confirmed track is driving-through-countryside-friendly *Radar Love* by Golden Earring, but anticipate songs across multiple genres.

ODD JOBS

44 Remember vigilante and firefighting missions in *GTAs* past? They won't be in this one, but there will be an equivalent set of odd tasks to get up to.

MULTIPLAYER WILL BE REVAMPED...

45 In what form, we don't yet know, but based on *Red Dead* and *GTA IV* a free roam mode seems pretty much a certainty. Expect Rockstar to ramp up the customisation and expression through multiplayer, which was somewhat lean in the last game.

...WITH MAX PAYNE 3'S CREWS

46 Did you form gangs in *Max Payne 3*'s multiplayer? One of its features, no doubt intended to help sell the noir shooter sequel, was the ability to form gangs that could cross over into *GTA V*. So, gather a solid *Max Payne 3* crew and they can be waiting for you on day one of *GTA V*'s release.

Did you ever tire of Roman wanting to get drunk with you, or Little Jacob wanting to play darts? You won't be dealing with that in *GTA V*

GTA IV CHARACTERS WILL RETURN

47 But who? Rockstar has confirmed that we'll see some familiar faces in Los Santos, but we just don't know who. We're going to lay down a guess for one name: Gay Tony. He'd go halfway across the country to party, right?

GOOGLE EARTH-STYLE SWITCHING

48 When you change between characters across the world, there'll be a lovely visual effect to reflect that, one that recalls everyone's favourite country-stalking time waster, Google Earth. There was something a bit like this in *Midnight Club: Los Angeles*, actually.

MELEE COMBAT HAS BEEN OVERHAULED

49 Not that melee combat is ever a massive deal in *GTA* compared to the shooting, but the hand-to-hand stuff will nonetheless get a revamp with the fifth game, after turning a bit passive in *GTA IV*.

FRIENDS AND WELL-WISHERS

50 Pals are still part of the out-of-mission experience. As mentioned, Michael has his family, Trevor has his crazy buddy Ron and Franklin has Lamar – but given *GTA*'s propensity to introduce more and more new characters, we'd anticipate more names to come.

BUSIER MAP

51 Realising that a lot of *GTA IV*'s functionality was hidden on the phone, expect to see many more icons on the map as Rockstar makes you feel like the world is full of cool stuff, just waiting for you to find it.

POUR GASOLINE ON CARS, SET THEM ON FIRE

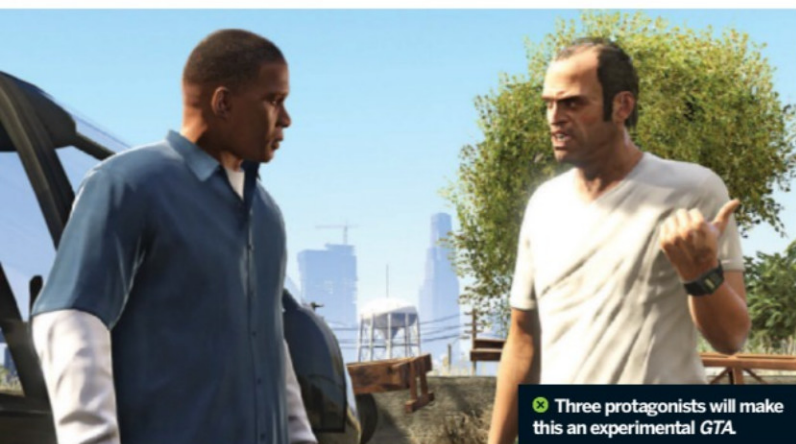
52 That's new. You could never set fire to stuff in the other *GTAs*, but this will apparently let you do that mid-mission – hopefully you'll be able to do it outside of the campaign as well.

LOADS MORE "RANDOM PEOPLE"

53 Remember those jammy chaps? They were tiny missions based off interacting with the citizens of Liberty City, and some of the most memorable moments of the entire experience came with them, as they offered little slices of the different lads and ladies that existed within this virtual world. Los Santos will apparently ramp them up.



Each character has different specialties.



Three protagonists will make this an experimental GTA.



If only lifeguards carried firearms.

THE GAME'S IN IT

54 Pretty decent rapper The Game confirmed his involvement with the game in an interview with an US radio station, leading some to believe he was reprising his role of B-Dup from *San Andreas*. It could be a radio cameo, we suppose...

NARRATIVE CHOICES RETURN

55 You'll get to shape parts of the story according to your own personal choices, like you did in *GTA IV*, only no doubt in a more complex fashion.

THE CITY IS OPEN FROM THE START

56 Worth bearing in mind, given that Rockstar used to keep certain islands or locations out of reach. Now, *Just Cause 2*-style, you can go anywhere at any time!

WILDLIFE

57 No doubt helped by *Red Dead*'s eco system, certain areas of the Los Santos region will have slices of wildlife. Of course, don't expect the hunting stuff from the Wild West to appear – as much as we'd like to hunt then skin Bigfoot again.

LOS SANTOS CITIZENS HAVE ROUTINES

58 Like in *Deadly Premonition*! Follow an NPC around and they'll have their own little lives going on while you stalk them.

MUSICAL SCORE

59 The first time ever in a *GTA* game, where original music is saved for the beginning and end of the story, we're going to see mid-music score kick-in, no doubt a reaction to how effective it was in *LA Noire*.

101 MIND-BLOWING FACTS



60 MILITARY VEHICLES

There's a military base – ergo, military vehicles. Spotted so far, of course, is a stylish military jet, but we'd like to see a tank too...



We're sure we've seen this in a movie somewhere.

Vehicles

THERE ARE LOTS OF FANCY WAYS TO GET AROUND LOS SANTOS, SOME OF WHICH ARE RETURNING FROM SAN ANDREAS AND EVEN VICE CITY STORIES. **HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL BE JACKING IN GTA V...**

AIRPLANES

61 You can steal aircraft from the start – that doesn't mean it'll be easy, however, with airport security and all.

GOLF BUGGIES

62 Oh yes. You messed about in them with *Vice City*, and now they're back for hopefully similar levels of nonsense.

RETURNING CARS

63 The Sentinel and Cheetah vehicles, seen in pretty much every *GTA* instalment going back to the third game in 2001, will make a return.



MOTORBIKES

64 They go vroom. We'd like to fall off them less in this one, since Rockstar got the perfect balance in *The Lost And Damned*.

HELICOPTERS

65 Helicopters return from *GTA IV*. As seen in the trailer, one gets blown up by

BICYCLES

66 Yes, you'll be able to cruise through Los Santos on a bicycle, recalling one of the first missions in *San Andreas*.

NEW CARS

67 Two new vehicles revealed so far: an Audi take-off, the 9F, and a large truck known as a Bodhi. With a larger variety of environments, expect more cars than ever to reflect that difference in landscapes, not to mention the usual *GTA* thing of more affluent areas having different vehicles.

JET SKIS

68 Returning for the first time since *Vice City* Stories, believe it or not. Jet skis apparently make more sense in Los Santos than they would've done in Liberty City, and you can fire guns while manning them.

ATVS

69 Remember these in *San Andreas*? Should be fun to try and traverse Mount Chiliad on one...

Legacy

LESSONS LEARNED FROM OTHER ROCKSTAR GAMES

INSPIRATION FROM GTA IV DLC'S MULTI-PERSPECTIVE STORY

70 *Episodes From Liberty City* changed GTA

forever, offering players two other perspectives on the game's setting that convincingly transformed the experience of living in that city.

DETAIL VS SCALE FROM GTA IV AND RED DEAD

71 If *GTA IV* was a hyper-detailed city in a bottle, *Red Dead* was the open road – both worked beautifully as a combination and *GTA V* marries those two sensibilities, so you'll get a world to explore that's expansive yet relentlessly populated with landmarks.

SYMBIOTIC MULTIPLAYER/SINGLE-PLAYER

72 Rockstar wants the multiplayer in *GTA V* to be as crucial as the single-player was in *GTA III*. The suite of modes has gradually improved over time in Rockstar's titles – this will be the biggest multiplayer yet.

ADVANCED MOTION-CAPTURE

73 These are the best-looking characters we've ever seen in a Rockstar game, from the way they interact with one another to the facial expressions of character models – a by-product of the actors working together in motion capture.

ONE CHARACTER CAN'T DO EVERYTHING, SO HAVE THREE

74 Niko Bellic: one minute expressing remorse, the next firing rockets at taxis in Star Junction. Rockstar realised there was a logic gap in there somewhere, and that's why three characters are there in this – to permit that kind of multi-tiered experience with a story to match.

IMPROVED STORYTELLING

75 That's what the three characters are about, above anything else – storytelling opportunities. And *Red Dead*, *GTA IV*, *LA Noire* and *Max Payne 3* have all given Rockstar the opportunity to hone its writing process.

MAX PAYNE 3 PERFECTED ROCKSTAR'S SHOOTING

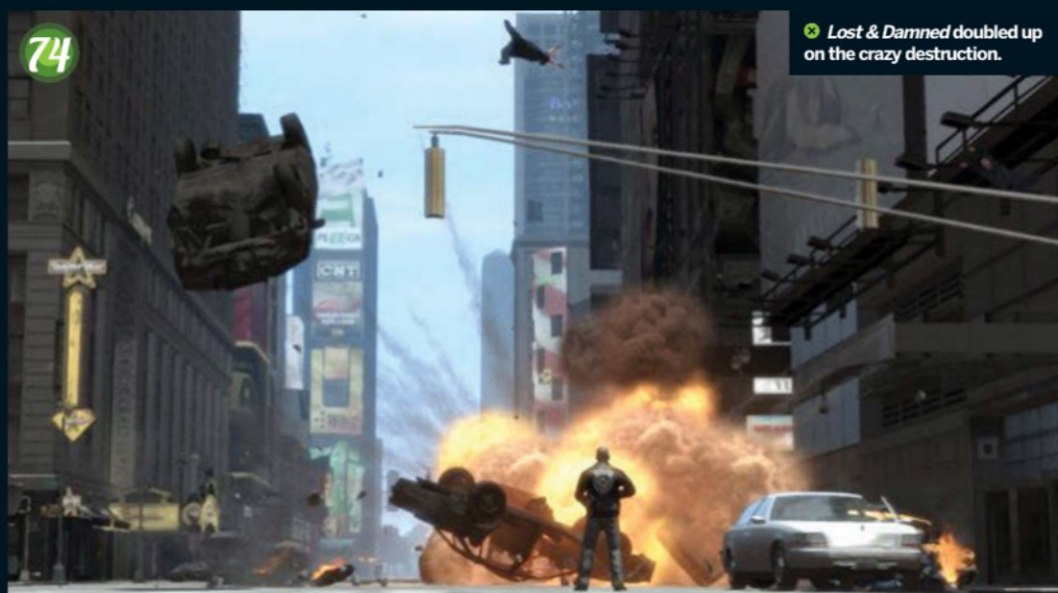
76 *Max Payne 3*'s shooting mechanics were rock-solid compared to the floatier *GTA IV* and *Red Dead Redemption*, giving the player a visceral precision that *GTA V* is likely to replicate.

ROCKSTAR HAS BUILT LA BEFORE

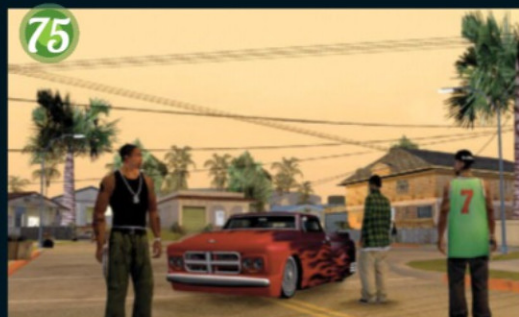
77 Three times, in fact: *San Andreas*, *Midnight Club: Los Angeles* and of course the magnificent *LA Noire* all have interpretations of the geographically laborious (seriously, try getting transport between downtown and Hollywood in LA – it's almost not worth it) city.



Previous games by Rockstar set the precedent for all this.



Lost & Damned doubled up on the crazy destruction.

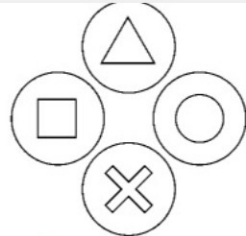


FREEFORM MISSION STRUCTURES

78 There won't just be one way to tackle a mission in *GTA V* – many of them are likely to be scripted, but there'll be variables in the way some of these play out, in the way you approach the scenario, though Rockstar hasn't revealed specifics on these yet.

IMPROVED DRIVING VS. GTA IV

79 Cars felt a little bit heavy in *GTA IV*, which Rockstar acknowledges – we're anticipating that the vehicles will be zipper when turning corners, a la *Saints Row*.



What *won't* be in GTA V

NOT EVERYTHING FROM PREVIOUS GAMES MAKES A RETURN APPEARANCE...

GOODBYE, PS2-ERA GTA CHARACTERS

80 Rockstar sees the PS2-era *GTA* lads and ladies as 'mythical' in respect to this hi-def *GTA* universe, so there won't be any background cameos for the likes of Claude or CJ. But what about Lazlow? He exists in both universes on the radio! Confusing.

PROPERTY BUYING – GONE

81 Noooooooo! You'll have things to spend money on, but sadly you won't be able to hoard houses this time around. Bit sad, since this was one of the most enjoyable aspects in *San Andreas*, and even *Chinatown Wars* on PSP.

NO FEMALE PROTAGONIST

82 Three main characters, and not one woman? We suppose Rockstar's hallmark has come in the form of troubled men with some kind of dark past, but three characters would've marked a perfect opportunity to debut a strong female character. Maybe if there's some DLC?



LOVE INTERESTS WOULD BE TOO CONFUSING

83 That's why they're not in there – with three playable characters, keeping track of three sets of love interests could be a nightmare in character management.

NO INTERNATIONAL SETTING

84 Rockstar explored the idea of a *GTA* game in another country (remember *London 1969*?) but ultimately went against it, deciding Americana was kind of the point of *GTA* in its current iteration.

NO CELEBRITIES AS MAIN CHARACTERS

85 Expect them to pop up on radio stations, though, as previously mentioned with *The Game*. Rockstar motion-captured with the main actors in the game over a significant period of time, which would've been expensive with celebrities. Plus, it believes players would find their presence distracting (though we would argue that recognisable stars from credible drama *Mad Men* enhanced *LA Noire*).

LOSING/GAINING WEIGHT? NOPE

86 Due to various technical issues, apparently. This was a lot easier to do when the PS2 character models were relatively simple back in the day, with their blocky graphics, but not in this new-fangled age of extraordinarily detailed character models. *Saints Row: The Third* did it well, though...

NO LA NOIRE MO-CAP

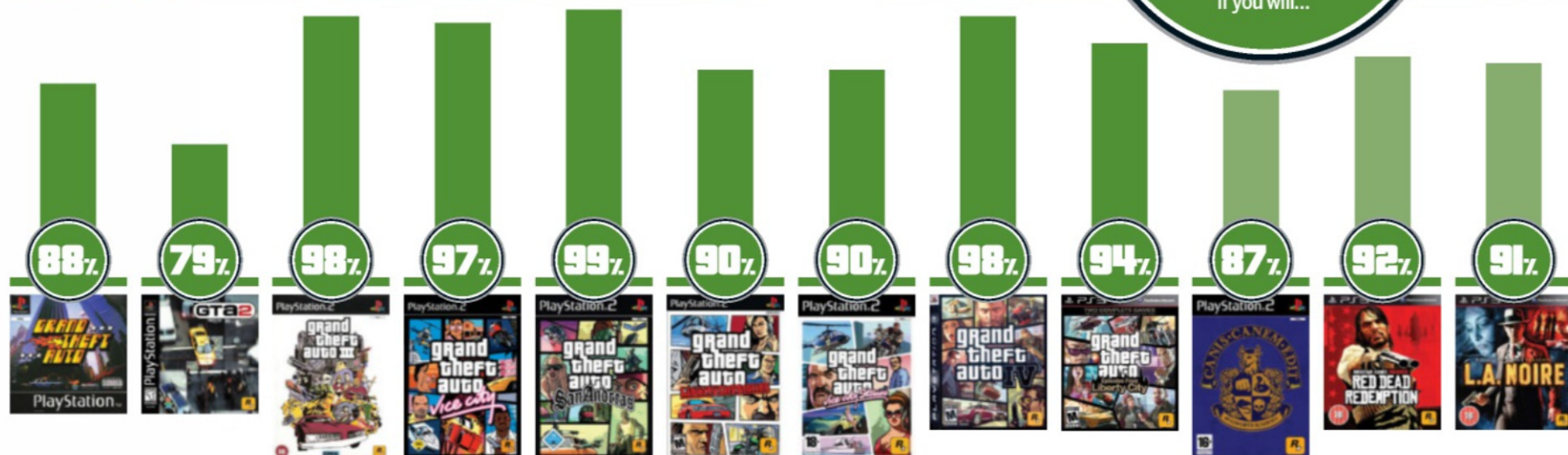
87 No scarily realistic human faces – we knew this already, but it's worth reaffirming.

NO LONG DRIVES BACK TO THE CITY

88 Switching between the three lads won't mean lots of backtracking. If you get lost in the countryside with one character then switch, you won't still be stranded when you return to playing as that protagonist.

NO RPG STUFF

89 Never mind, eh? You won't be hitting the virtual gym or overdosing on burgers in the fifth *GTA*. Not that you'll be short on stuff to do in Los Santos anyway...





Cinematic Rockstar does it again. We're tingling from all the epic.



Finally, Here's Some Daft Sh*t

SPOTTED: BALLAS GANG

91 Seen scrawled on a park bench in the second trailer. Could the Ballas be back in *GTA V*?

SILLY BRAND NAMES ARE BACK

92 Anna Rexic, Lucky Plucker, the return of Rusty Brown's Ring Donuts and many more to be revealed, no doubt.

ROCKSTAR CAN STILL BE JUVENILE

93 Mad man Trevor will have an angry poo at one point during the story.

PISWASSER IS BACK

94 Everyone's favourite shit beer returns to *GTA*.

STREET NAMES

95 We've spotted these so far: Del Perro Freeway, West Elipse Boulevard and Bay City Avenue. What have you managed to find in the trailers?

AMMUNITION RETURNS

96 Our favourite dodgy arms dealer outlet is back.

YOU CAN RE-ENACT THE FILM SIDEWAYS (PROBABLY)

97 Presuming you can get drunk, like in *GTA IV*, the inclusion of wine fields makes us optimistic we can get pissed and fall over in the middle of hundreds of grapevines – plus, main character Trevor even looks a bit like Paul Giamatti!

ACROBATIC DOGS!

98 There's a dog running across a car in the second trailer. He's so on it!

CARS FALLING OUT OF AIRPLANES

99 Spotted this in trailer two, as well – as if you could miss it! An *Uncharted 3*-style bit where a vehicle rolls out the back of the plane, taking one of the characters with it. Very exciting indeed.

CRASHING TRAINS

100 As seen in the second trailer, there'll be some mad shit that will see the characters getting into all kinds of Michael Bay-esque antics, such as two trains crashing together.

101

Coming Spring 2013

But when exactly?

MAY 2013

That's when we think it's getting here, based on *Max Payne 3*, *LA Noire* and *Red Dead*.



DEC



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OCT



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Need To Know



All-Stars Gets DLC

You can download Emmet from *Starhawk* and Kat from *Gravity Rush* for free in January with *PlayStation All-Stars*. Hopefully these are the first in a long line of DLC packs for the brilliant fighting game, which is balanced in Sackboy's favour to a ridiculous bloody degree, even post-patch...

PS3'S TEN-YEAR LIFESPAN

When the PS3 was first released, Sony's Kaz Hirai declared that the console would last for ten years. Six years in, how true does that promise now seem? We asked a few experts to find out...

We look at our products having a ten-year life cycle, which we've proven with the PlayStation," Sony's president Kaz Hirai told CNET just months before the PS3 launched. "We're not going to ask the consumers to suddenly buy another PlayStation console in five years time, and basically have their investment go by the wayside."

Fair enough, we thought at the time – at a colossal, wallet-troubling £425, the PlayStation 3 was a gigantic investment for even the most flush of gamers. Still, with the promise of a decade's support from Sony, it didn't seem so bad, and with an ever-strengthening line-up the console has more than proved worth

the pricy admission fee. The PS3 has become a vital component of our living rooms, a real entertainment hub. Now, as it passes the six-year mark, we're curious as to whether Sony is going to keep to that – and how exactly that will pan out for players.

"I haven't heard Sony talk about their ten-year lifespan for their gaming products in a while," says EEDAR's VP Jesse Divnich. "I don't necessarily know if that is even true given how rapidly technology has been evolving. I think their ten-year rule is more of a stretch goal and a metaphor for their approach to building technologies that can stay relevant years after its release. Phones become obsolete in two years, computers in three. If Sony can continue to build platforms that





Bungie on PS3

Halo-maker Bungie's new IP *Destiny* was leaked recently, and it seems that the FPS/MMO hybrid is heading towards our lovely PS3s, boasting an all-new sci-fi universe that looks more than inspired by *Warhammer 40K* in the way it's being presented right now. Early days, but promising...



Dragon Age III on PS4?

We're near-certain that it will be. EA announced the game without a format, and considering developers have had dev kits for a while with PS4, we think it could be a big deal near-launch title. The thought of this excites us a lot, since we're far from done with BioWare's fantasy series.



MGS4 25th Anniversary

Out now with the included Trophy support and an all-new cover is the *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots 25th Anniversary Edition* (bit of a mouthful, that). Not really worth reviewing, but we wanted to bring it to your attention anyway, since we absolutely love the cutscene-full game.



remain relevant five years after release, I'd consider it a job well done."

Looking back on past generations, the whole ten-year thing was short hand for continual support for the hardware. Sony published PS2 ports of PSP games three years after the PS3 arrived in stores – the same sort of thinking applied to PSone, but it didn't necessarily mean the biggest releases found their way onto the console. Don't expect Naughty Dog to keep making PS3 games once the PS4's arrived, for example.

That doesn't necessarily mean the PS3's technical capabilities have been exhausted, though. "Not at all, remembering back to PS2, when *God Of War 2* released at the end of the life cycle people were blown away by it, as was I," says Just Add Water CEO Stewart Gilray, whose company brought the excellent *Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath* to PS3 and will soon bring *Munch's Oddysee* in HD as well. "Some of the things we're starting to see now look amazing! Take a look at *GTA V* with the screenshots and footage, all PS3, so yeah I think the PS3 has a fair amount of capabilities left."

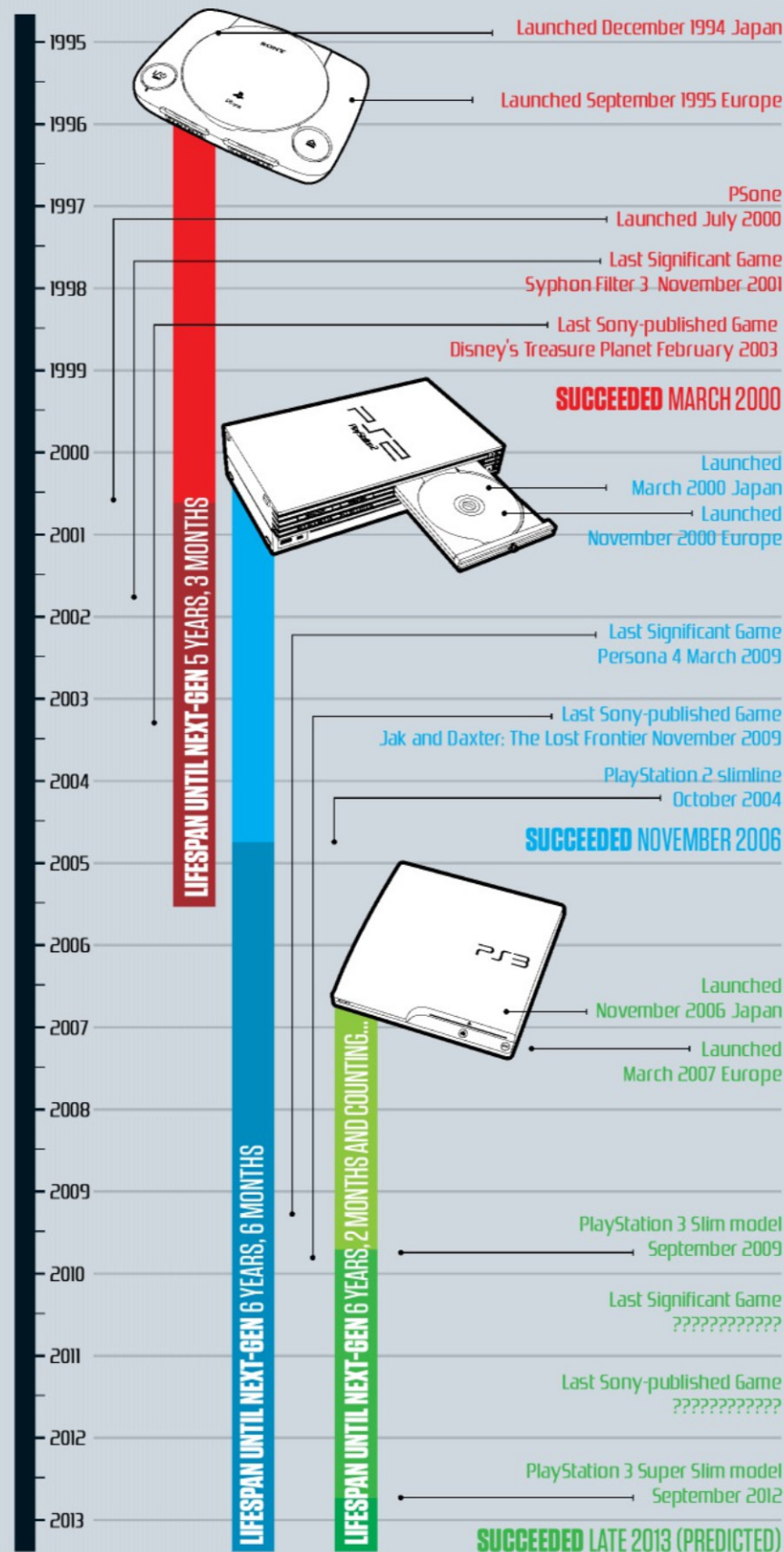
Divnich is less convinced. "It's fair to assume that developers have squeezed every bit of juice from the PlayStation 3 and other 7th generation consoles," he says. "I think anytime you put a new piece of technology into a developer's hands they'll get excited. We don't even know what it looks like, or have any final specifications for both Sony and Microsoft's next-generation hardware, but developers are definitely excited on the thought of working on new hardware."

Gilray believes that PS3 owners shouldn't need to worry about Sony dropping support for the PS3 anytime soon, even if the PS4 does arrive here by next year. "Platform holders want their hardware to last as long as possible, look at PS2 – they keep saying ten years for that, but when the PS3 came out, hadn't the PS2 had only been around for six to seven years? So whilst ten years is an ideal lifespan chances are it will be, but that will extend the next system's release window, after all, the previous generation doesn't end as soon as the next generation is released."

So no need to worry right now – not with *The Last Of Us* and *Beyond: Two Souls* to look forward to in 2013, as well as countless third-party titles that demonstrate the strengths of the so-called 'ageing' PS3 hardware. Maybe the PlayStation 3 won't soar for the last part of its ten years, but we're already guaranteed a terrific seven years through the end of 2013.

PSone vs PS2 vs PS3

The stats on how long each console has been running for, and why the PS4 is overdue...





FIVE THINGS WITH...

SETH KILLIAN

The King of Fighters
talks PlayStation
All-Stars Battle Royale



1 ON COMPARISONS TO SMASH BROS

"I don't think anybody sees them as different. Or the man on the street doesn't see them as different enough, which is unfortunate. It's obviously understandable because they look quite similar on the outside but the core mechanics of the game is really nothing like *Smash*. So I think actually in one sense, if we just made a *Smash* clone, we'd probably have been in a much better state! [laughs]

But we wanted to do our own thing! So it's the genre of fighters like *Smash*, but the core mechanics are much, much closer to *Street Fighter* or *Marvel* in the detail."



2 FAVOURITE ALL-STARS CHARACTER

"My favourite character right now is Nathan Drake. I like *Uncharted* a lot but Nathan Drake is, to me, kind of a wise-cracking Han Solo type of character. And I don't usually like that kind of character. That was the guy who was always picking on me. [laughs]

So I don't need that guy but I like his play style. I like picking up the barrel and following it in for mayhem. I consider him the strong sort of mid-range character. I consider him kind of like, the Guile of *All-Stars*. Throw out the barrel, like a Sonic Boom, and you follow it in and you've got the low forward and you've got to know all the right ranges..."



3 THE FUTURE OF FIGHTING GAMES

"I think the way to really expand fighting games is to make them relevant to new audiences. So hopefully, I think *All-Stars* can be a good piece of outreach in terms of it drawing a lot of characters, so I think we'll get a lot of people who are fans of the characters who are interested in the game, even if they wouldn't consider themselves as interested in fighting games. And I think these people will learn a lot of the core concepts of fighting games and maybe move onto the other ones as well."



4 ON PAID DLC IN FIGHTING GAMES...

"I don't know if *Street Fighter X Tekken* is the best test case of whether that's a workable concept just because the way it was implemented was not popular with the community. Paid DLC turned a lot of people off early, unfortunately. So that's one direction but also for games like *Street Fighter*, it's not possible to go in this sort of, relatively simple input kind of direction."



5 ON 'BORROWING' TECH FROM PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BETA TESTERS

"[laughs] I steal shamelessly! I steal all the tech and improve on it. I had a proper training mode and none of the people the beta had that. I was able to improve on all their tech in short order but I know they'll catch me very quickly once the game is released."

But it's that kind of stuff, seeing new possibilities. With another guy, he had a wall bounce into a level 1 combo [with PaRappa]. I knew those was possible but I didn't know this particular one was possible and his was better than mine!"

JOEL FROM THE LAST OF US

The Last Of Us is competing with Beyond: Two Souls as the coolest-looking PS3 exclusive right now – but Naughty Dog's The Road-like epic has a potentially fascinating new hero in Joel The Surnameless (we don't know that bit yet). Here's what we do know about Ellie's guardian...

GRIZZLED AND BATTLE-DAMAGED

Joel is a man who's seen the old, pre-plague world of *The Last Of Us*, and has endured hardships to survive against this wicked backdrop. This is the demeanour of a man who's gone through hell to survive, and he looks battered by the elements. We imagine this is what Nathan Drake would resemble had he gone on a five-month bender, while being forced to sleep outside for three of those months after losing his keys.

FATHER FIGURE

A large part of *The Last Of Us*' story will revolve around the relationship between Joel and Ellie, with Joel acting as a surrogate father to his younger charge. The biggest difference between the two of them, of course, is background: Ellie does not remember the time before all this plague stuff, because she was born in the midst of this broken world. Joel does his best to keep her safe, while training Ellie to use weapons in the name of self-preservation.

PHYSICAL FIGHTER

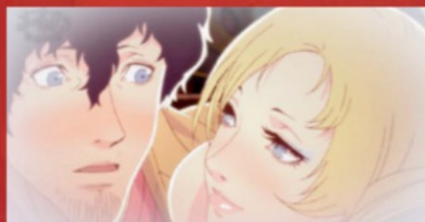
Joel is a survivor against the backdrop of extraordinary circumstances, and that means he's learn to adapt to his environment when fending off the infected or fellow human bastards. With a lack of bullets to work with, Joel has to be resourceful in his survival techniques, which means relying on his physical prowess for much of the time.

ENIGMATIC BACKGROUND

"Who am Joel?" asks the uninformed layman, scratching their head at every trailer for *The Last Of Us* while guzzling a mixture of energy drinks and Skittles, rearranging their dirty underpants and firing filthy libel into NeoGaf. So who is Joel, exactly? We know now that he was on the 'other' side in the survivor conflict going on in *The Last Of Us*, presumably one of the bandits that he now beats down with metal pipes.

BAKER'S DOZEN

JOEL IS VOICED BY TROY 'NEW NOLAN NORTH' BAKER, A RIDICULOUSLY PROLIFIC (AND TALENTED) ACTOR WHO AGAIN CAPTURES THE ESSENCE OF THE LIKEABLE EVERYMAN, BUT IN A DIFFERENT WAY THAT NORTH DID FOR DRAKE. ANYWAY, HERE'S WHERE YOU'VE HEARD BAKER BEFORE:



VINCENT IN CATHERINE

Everyone's favourite cheater in Catherine, Vincent faced a choice many idiots can no doubt empathise with: chase the playful blonde lady (who also happens to be a demon) or the frumpy brunette with her notions of starting a family? Vincent is still one of the most interesting characters in games, and Baker played him well.



BATMAN IN LEGO BATMAN 2

Batman? Who is this Batman you speak of? We'd love to be able to put that on our CV – "Was Batman in *Lego Batman 2*, threw some shit Superman's way." Baker's sillier take on Batman was somewhere between every on-screen portrayal of the character, from Adam West to Christian Bale, with tongue firmly in cheek.



SNOW IN FINAL FANTASY XIII/XIII-2

We're big fans of Snow, the daftly named sexy blonde hero in *Final Fantasy XIII*, who simultaneously wants to protect those he cares about while also running off on a ludicrous adventure (like beating up a plant). Anyway, Baker's performance is up there as one of the strongest in the *XIII* 'saga' with Ali Hillis's Lightning.



JAKE MULLER IN RESIDENT EVIL 6

Ah, you're starting to figure out what he sounds like, right? Sort of that likeable badass thing – a mix of gruff dickhead and lovely nice hero seems to be what Baker plays best. In *Resident Evil 6*, Jake tries so hard to be cool we're surprised he doesn't just fall over for no reason. That's what happens when we try to be cool.

WHY PS3 IS STILL
FIT AND FIGHTING

It's been a blockbuster fifth year for the PS3, with some of the console's best titles yet – but we've still not reached the peak of the hardware's output...



HEY, WE MAY be a bit bloody biased, but PlayStation 3 has definitely had the best exclusives of this generation. Sure, as the premier independent voice of the PlayStation faithful, we're not exactly going to toot the horn of *Halo Wars*, *Blue Dragon* or *shudder* *Wii Sports Resort*, but still: *Uncharted 2*, *Heavy Rain*, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, *Journey*, *LittleBigPlanet*, just for starters. We've won this. PlayStation 3 has proved to be the right choice for gamers who value a terrific range of distinctive titles, and while Sony might've been sloppy at times in the way the brand has been presented to players, ultimately they've won through in this generation. And it isn't done yet.

Last month I wrote about the ways PS4 could improve big series – but that doesn't mean we *need* PS4 right now. This year, we've seen the likes of *XCOM*, *Hitman: Absolution*, *Dishonored* and *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* showcase the power of a so-called 'ageing' console, in what might be the most creatively healthy year of releases on PlayStation 3 since 2008 (with *LBP*, *Fallout 3* and many others).

The point is, the PS3 is whatever developers make of it, and before the next-gen console is shuffled in and the process of making a game becomes more and more cost prohibitive to mid-sized studios, let's see how much the games industry can draw out of the system. At the climax of the PS2's lifecycle, *Okami*, *Kingdom Hearts II*, *God Hand*, *Shadow Of The Colossus*, *Bully* and *Resident Evil 4* all provided either a technical or a creative high note for the hardware; it showed that the PS2's so-called 'restraints' couldn't stop gaming's smartest minds from crafting unique experiences.

And I think we've seen a shade of that this year with the afore-mentioned titles, while 2013 will mirror the end of the PS2 in a similar way: *The Last Of Us*, *BioShock Infinite*, *Beyond: Two Souls*, *GTA V*, and *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* all speak to me as the same type of titles, games that maximise the advantages of existing hardware and have that flavour of experimentation that we wouldn't have gotten earlier in the generation. PS3 has a long way to go, and I still think we're yet to see the peak of its powers, even with its successor on the horizon.



“ Before the next-gen console is shuffled in, let's see what the industry can draw out ”



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TOP 5

OPEN WORLD GAMES TO PLAY UNTIL GTA V

We've got about five months to wait until GTA V, but that doesn't mean we're lacking in terrific sandbox games to prat around in. Here are five excellent open world titles that'll fill that void...

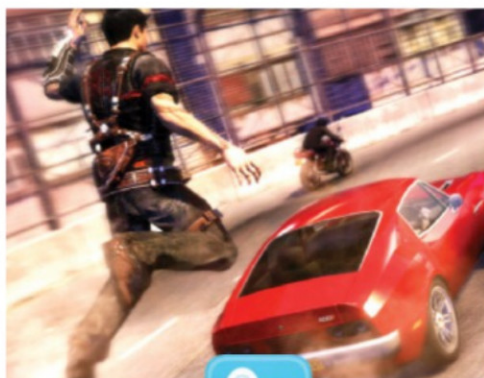


1 SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD

Awesome fun and an amazing alternative to *GTA* that ramps up the customisation, the third *Saints Row* is the best one by far, allowing you to play as a toilet seat at one point, as well as owning your own business empire and blitzing an aircraft carrier with rockets.

2 SLEEPING DOGS

Tows a great line between *GTA* and *Saints Row* in terms of design sensibility, there's a great mix of the silly and the serious in *Sleeping Dogs*, though we're still absolutely gutted that no dogs are actually involved. A real treat, now at a bargain price.

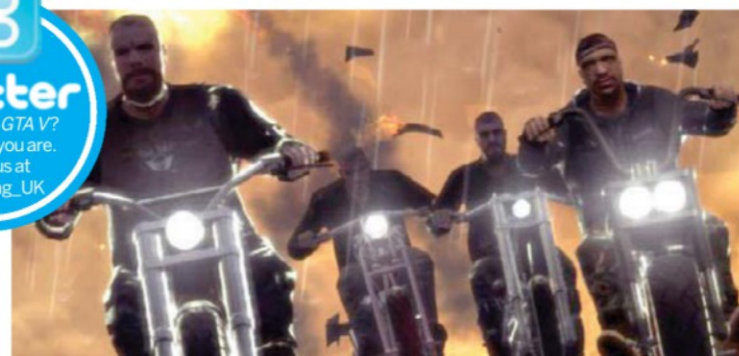


3 JUST CAUSE 2

Size is everything. *Just Cause 2* has one of the biggest virtual playgrounds we've ever seen in a game, and while great big patches of it are just sexy window dressing, the overall experience is so picturesque that you'll want to live in it (but you can't, because that's mental).

4 INFAMOUS 2

Forget reality — why not just be a superhero in an open world instead? Or even a supervillain? We bloody love *inFamous 2*. The combination of good and bad-branded superpowers and an idiosyncratically-designed city really works for us, and now you can pick it up for a tenner.



5 GTA: THE LOST AND DAMNED

Why not just go back to *GTA* itself? *The Lost And Damned* might just be our favourite *GTA* storyline so far, with Johnny Klebitz's struggle within a decaying biker gang proving that Liberty City had many stories in her outside of Niko Bellic's American nightmare.

AND FOUR YOU SHOULDN'T

Seriously. Just look at 'em



TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA

We thought it was quite good at the time, but it turns out that *True Crime* has dated really badly and that we forgot about the weird dragon bits.



THE SIMPSONS: HIT AND RUN

Again, remember when everyone considered this the good *Simpsons* game? It wasn't, with terrible driving and a lukewarm-at-best script.



PROTOTYPE 2

We were sorry to see Radical, the developer of *Prototype 2*, go when it did, but this idiot-focused open world game did nothing for us.

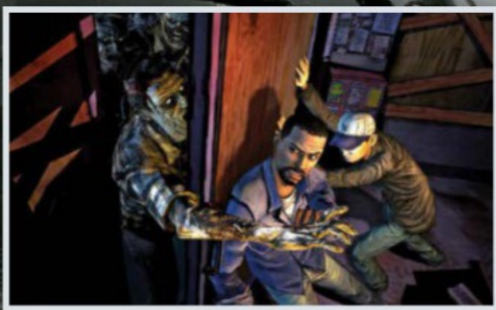
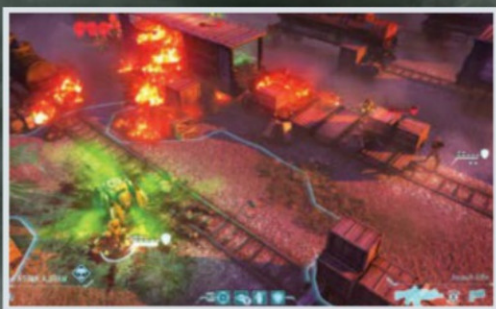


DRIV3R

Oh dear lord. *Driver* tried to update itself to compete with *GTA III* and, well, it still hurts to think about the results.



WHAT'S THE BEST GAME OF 2012?



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Assassin's Creed III. Bigger, better, bolder. I'm enjoying the new setting and new abilities.

DANTE BALE

Mass Effect 3 just because I'm still playing the multiplayer week in and week out

PAUL GURNEY

Resident Evil 6. Because I haven't played many games this year lol. Best download game: Rainbow Moon.

SIMON WELBURN

Best Game: The Walking Dead
Game I most enjoyed: Max Payne 3.

SIMON NELSON

Darksiders II.

MITCHELL SABBAG

Silent Hill Downpour... I thought it was class

TONY WATSON

SKELTON

The Walking Dead.

CALLUM THOMSON



YouTube

youtube.com/PlayMagUK

LBP Karting, All-Stars, Far Cry 3, Hitman, Blops 2
XXDYLYWILLYXX

XCOM: Enemy Unknown. Although I've just had my entire squad destroyed in a chrysalid terror attack...

KOBIE VAN DER WESHUIZEN

Uncharted: Golden Abyss!! Better than Uncharted 3!!

MATT THYS SMIDT

Cod bo 2 is well better than_ halo cos halo 4 is a bunch of sheep shit

3ISEXYHOB0



twitter

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@CAMERONPARKIN

Uncharted: Golden Abyss.

@DRAGONKINSVERD

Sleeping Dogs.

@HANKBIZZLE

For me its been Wipeout 2048. They really should've made a PS3 version, amazing game.

@MYNAMEISE_

Tales Of Graces f for sure.

@NIRVANAFANWICKS

The Darkness 2 for me it was just brilliant from start to finish, Sleeping Dogs a close second, then Mass Effect 3

@KITTLE11

Skylanders Giants, seeing my kids so excited is better than any Fifa or Call Of Duty. 2nd is Fifa though!

@DSOINIX

Very excited about The Last Of Us every playthrough could potentially be different from what I've seen so far.

@PJMARTIN1995

Out of what I've played: Walking Dead. But Sleeping Dogs looks awesome, I'm getting it for Christmas

@GAMER69R

Rochard and Borderlands 2. Both equally awesome!

@THE_MAN76

Dishonored. Masterpiece. Over and out!

@SUPERMARIOEX

Uncharted: Golden Abyss followed by Motor Storm RC. Firm favourites. Gravity Rush is epic too.



Play Online

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INSTALL

PLAY'S GRAND SUPER AWARDS 2012

Anybody saying 2012 was anything other than an excellent year for gaming is a fool and possibly a heretic. We've even put some awards together to show you just how wrong they are...

BEST PS3 GAME OF 2012



XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

■ **PUBLISHER:** 2K Games
■ **DEVELOPER:** Firaxis Games
■ **RELEASED:** October

In a perfect world we would have seen one of the most fondly-remembered strategy games of all time handed to a studio that knew it inside and out and loved it as much as even the most ardent of fans – because the studio itself was made up of those very fans. We would have ended up with a game of such intense quality that it would be hard to soak in the delights of any of the other instant classics released in 2012. We would bathe each and every day in strategic glory. We would curse the gods above us for taking our brightest and best soldiers. We would marvel at the fact the controls worked properly. It would be a grand time to be alive. We don't actually live in a perfect world, but Firaxis' *XCOM* remake has made us feel like we might.

RUNNERS UP: Hitman: Absolution, Dishonored



BEST VITA GAME OF 2012

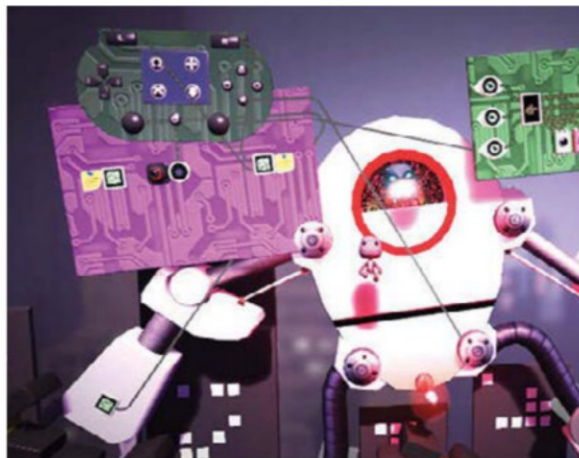


LITTLEBIGPLANET

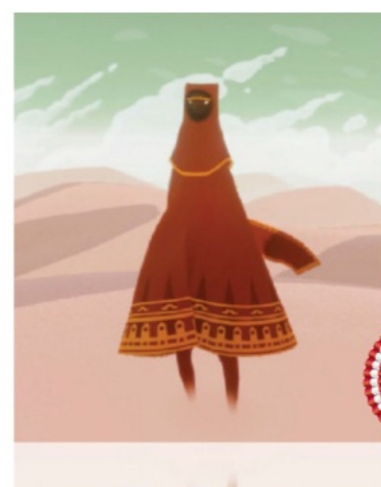
■ **PUBLISHER:** Sony Computer Entertainment
■ **DEVELOPER:** Double Eleven/Tarsier Studios
■ **RELEASED:** September

The fool cries from their soap box of how the PS Vita is a pointless handheld console, and there are no good games for it. The fool obviously didn't collate these awards, as we really struggled to decide exactly what from Vita's plentiful catalogue of excellent games should be awarded best in show. It just has to be *LittleBigPlanet*. It just has to. It feels, at times, like the handheld was designed just to house *LittleBigPlanet* – and equally that *LittleBigPlanet* should only ever have existed on Vita. To say they were made for each other would be to do a tldr of that last sentence. Vita may not be doing too well sales-wise, but it has plenty of amazing games for those who do own one. *LittleBigPlanet* is the best.

RUNNERS UP: Sound Shapes, Gravity Rush



BEST PSN GAME OF 2012



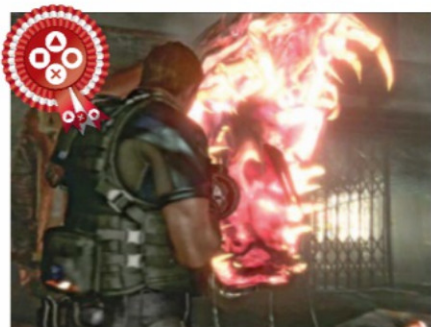
JOURNEY

■ **PUBLISHER:** Sony Computer Entertainment
■ **DEVELOPER:** thatgamecompany
■ **RELEASED:** March

What a fine year it's been for downloadable gaming – in any other year *The Walking Dead* would have taken this gong, tying for first place with *Zen Pinball* – but this year *Journey* came out. One of the most visually appealing titles available anywhere on PS3, the game is also one of the most unique. What you do is in the title, how you go about it is pretty straightforward and it's not even that long. So how on earth could it be the best PSN (or is it SEN?) game of the year? Easy: the experience. So much reviewing focuses on the mechanical aspects; the definable processes, cause and effect, measurements and easily quantifiable facts. *Journey* isn't a game to be held by those standards – it's just a game you should play.

RUNNERS UP: The Walking Dead, Zen Pinball 2





THE BARRY BURTON AWARD FOR BEST RESIDENT EVIL TITLE RESIDENT EVIL 6

■ **PUBLISHER:** Capcom
■ **DEVELOPER:** In-house
■ **RELEASED:** October



While the Burtons have been retired from *Play*'s pages ("they're too incredibly brilliant" was the official reason), that doesn't mean our favourite burgundy gilet-sporting ginger with a beard so manly it makes Chuck Norris weep one whole tear can't be included. And he wanted us to do this – he wanted us to give some mad props to *Resident Evil 6*. Because it's worth it. This turned out to be one of the year's best sequels, which would make Barry proud.

RUNNERS UP: RE: Operation Raccoon City, RE: Chronicles HD



THE GRAND THEFT AUTO III AWARD FOR 'BEST THIRD GAME IN THE SERIES' MASS EFFECT 3

■ **PUBLISHER:** EA
■ **DEVELOPER:** BioWare
■ **RELEASED:** March



Lots of third games of series came out this year, or at least we're maybe just noticing them more than we used to. Regardless, of those that came out in 2012 the best of the lot pretty much just has to be *Mass Effect 3*, because... well, *Mass Effect*. Sure, the ending is as divisive as an industrial dividing tool operating in disputed territory, but the rest of the game is utterly brilliant.

RUNNERS UP: Max Payne 3, Assassin's Creed 3



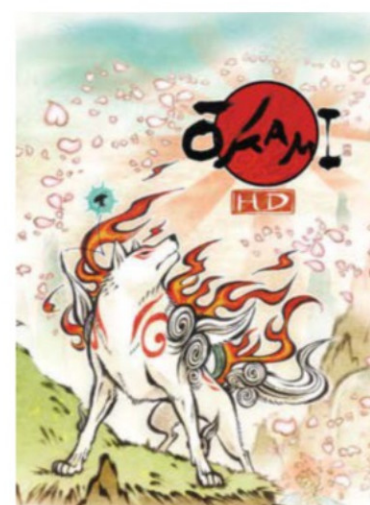
THE BEST GAME THAT TOTALLY LOOKED LIKE IT WOULD BE A NONSENSE GIMMICK BUT WAS ACTUALLY GREAT AWARD GRAVITY RUSH

■ **PUBLISHER:** SCE
■ **DEVELOPER:** SCE Japan Studio
■ **RELEASED:** June



We said as much at review time – we had played *Gravity Rush* and not been enamoured with it. It didn't click. Spending a bit of time with the finished game though helped the unmistakable moment occur: we suddenly *got* it. *Gravity Rush* is an interesting, unique, exciting and beautiful adventure and reason alone to pick up a Vita. No, really. Yeah, we didn't believe it either at first.

RUNNERS UP: The Unfinished Swan, Tokyo Jungle



THE LONE WOLF AWARD FOR BEST-LOOKING GAME OKAMI HD

■ **PUBLISHER:** Capcom
■ **DEVELOPER:** Clover Studios/Capcom/HexaDrive
■ **RELEASED:** October

Okami shows that art direction trumps technical fidelity every time, with this stunning HD re-release. You must play it now.

RUNNERS UP: Gravity Rush, Far Cry 3



THE AWARD FOR THE SEQUEL THAT MADE US SIGH SO HARD WE SUFFERED HYPOXIA ASSASSIN'S CREED III

■ **PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft
■ **DEVELOPER:** Ubisoft Montreal
■ **RELEASED:** October



Assassin's Creed III is certainly not a bad game by any stretch of the imagination. Would you believe it, it's a good game. A very good game. 78 per cent of it is good, in fact, meaning only 22 per cent of it is bad (that's Review Maths). But that didn't stop us from sighing so hard and for so long that our body was starved of the vital oxygen it needed to complete even the simplest of functions. It's just... bland.

RUNNERS UP: WWE 13, Prototype 2



THE BEST GAME NOBODY BOUGHT (BUT NOW YOU CAN GET IT FOR A TENNER) AWARD SLEEPING DOGS

■ **PUBLISHER:** Square-Enix
■ **DEVELOPER:** United Front Games
■ **RELEASED:** August



Oh, Activision. "We want not this foul game of exploration, shooting, brilliant melee combat and fun driving! We can do without this atmospheric recreation of Hong Kong that puts many other videogame cities to shame! We shall cast aside *True Crime* and see it rot on the scrapheap! Muahahaha!" So let's all thank Square-Enix for the rescue job, and United Front for making an unexpectedly good game.

RUNNERS UP: The Darkness 2, Binary Domain



THE REASON TO RE-SPEND MONEY WE'VE ALREADY SPENT AWARD MGS HD COLLECTION

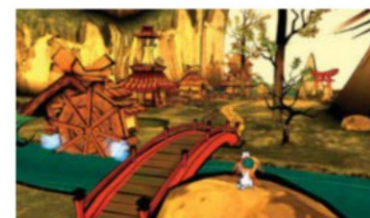
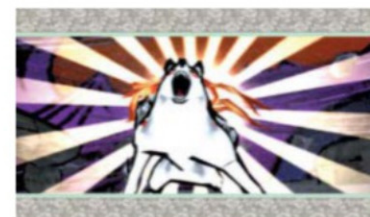
■ **PUBLISHER:** Konami
■ **DEVELOPER:** Kojima Productions/Bluepoint Games/Genki
■ **RELEASED:** June



HD remasterings still haven't quite reached that tipping point where they offend us to our very core, which is weird as we love being offended.

It's probably because things like the *MGS HD Collection* come out and dazzle us with their brilliance, with how fantastic they look, with how amazing *MGS3* and *Peace Walker* still are – and with how right *Play* was about *MGS2* first time around.

RUNNERS UP: The Ratchet And Clank Trilogy, Resident Evil 4 HD



Re:Play

You are the controller! But only on these pages

Why 2012 showed that innovation is still rife within PlayStation, why the Vita's account restrictions are pissing you off and a little big rant against LittleBigPlanet's current direction – it's the **Play** happy letters time!

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CAN WE COME TO PLAY'S OFFICE?

Dear **Play**,

As I am now considered an 'elder gamer' (Crikey, I sound like a dodgy character from *Skyrim*!) I often recall the golden age of 8-bit gaming in the Eighties and early Nineties and how each month I eagerly awaited to read the latest articles and reviews in my favourite gaming magazines of that time – *Crash* (a ZX Spectrum magazine) and *Zzap!64* (a Commodore 64 magazine).

However, the ensuing years saw me succumb to an active social and working life, which stopped me from enjoying the wonders of computer and console gaming, but since the launch of the PS3 I've fallen in love with gaming again. Now I'm a loyal subscriber to **Play** and enjoy reading your magazine to learn more about the big games studios and all the latest games out there to while away the hours!

Now having recently read an article about the growing trend in Esports in your esteemed publication, it got me thinking about how *Crash*/ *Zzap!64* used to have fun gaming competitions between its staff and the subscribers/fans of the magazine. Why and how has this once-proud tradition stopped? Surely it would give an added incentive for people to buy the magazine if they knew they were to feature in **Play**? Plus it would be great fun to see how Ian 'part-time pouter' Dransfield, new deputy editor Samuel 'I'm no murderer' Roberts and ex-editor Ryan 'sausage fingers' King would fare against subscribers and fans of the magazine.

I know some would say what's the point as there is online play nowadays, but that's just been anti-social! Some may call me old-fashioned (but please don't as that would hurt my feelings!) because I prefer face-to-face interaction rather than online play, but I believe fans of the magazine would love to visit **Play** magazine HQ and actually meet some of their gaming heroes (ie, the **Play** staff!).



You could even include highlights from the contests on the cover disc. Plus, in the future it would be possible to have gaming contests between PS3 and Xbox owners (a sort of duel between **Play** and its sister magazine **X360** if you will), now that would feature some fiery content for the cover disc!

Here's another suggestion to further attract more subscribers to the magazine, why not have a competition every month or so to allow a small group of magazine subscribers to shadow members of the **Play** team at E3 shows or at any interviews with the big-name/ independent gaming studios out there? It would be great fun and I'm sure it's not only me who would love the chance to visit games studios across the world.

Anyway, I'll sign off now and I thank you all for creating an informative and fun magazine. Yours,
Adrian Fisher

A great idea, Adrian, though a little tough to sort out – where would we fit everyone in our little Bournemouth offices? For now you're more than welcome to chat to **Play**'s staff and ex-staff over PSN, and it would definitely be great to try and organise something face-to-face in the far future. We are planning on doing more **Play** Community Nights in the future, so by all means tweet your suggestions to @playmag_UK. And if you want the experience of what it's like to go to work here, remember that we have a *LittleBigPlanet* level that simulates the experience, right down to dodging dog poo while walking through Boscombe.

THE BIG ISSUE

WHERE'S SKYRIM DLC ON PS3?

Hi **Play**,

I love the magazine, it is the best gaming magazine by miles. But this is not what I'm here to talk about.

As I am sure you are aware (especially Andy), it has been THREE MONTHS since Xbox and PC players got the Dawnguard DLC for *Skyrim*. PC players have also just been given the chance to purchase the *Hearthfire* DLC. PS3 players, however, STILL HAVEN'T EVEN HAD *DAWNGUARD* MADE AVAILABLE TO THEM!!!! This is ridiculous, Bethesda, and I realise you obviously do not have the capacity to develop anything at a reasonable pace on the PS3, but this is

extreme consolism (if that's a word!) Sort it out, Bethesda!

Sebastian Aycok

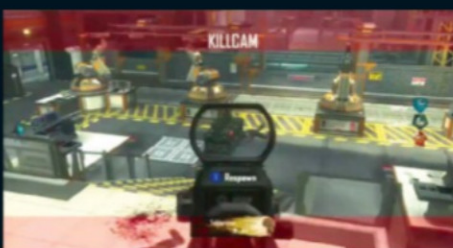
Yeah, we're annoyed by the constant delays too, and be assured that Sony and Bethesda are working together (at the time of writing) to solve the technical issues that have thus far kept *Skyrim* DLC from our beloved consoles. When we'll see them we'll believe it – for now it's just one of those frustrating things, already prolonged by the Xbox exclusivity deal. If it's any consolation – and it's very little – *Hearthfire*, the second DLC, is a bit bollocks.



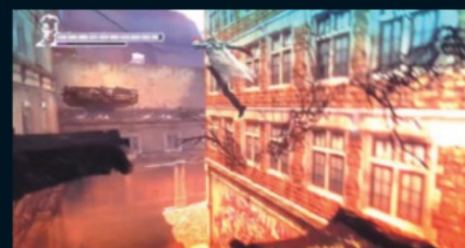
Things you may have missed on NowGamer.com's YouTube page



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CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II
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DEMO WALKTHROUGH

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Write in, and win! If you're chosen as Star Letter, you win a game. This month, the prize is Dragon Ball Z Budokai HD Collection from NamcoBandai. It's especially great if you like posturing before fights...

STAR LETTER INNOVATION ISN'T DEAD ON PS3

Dear **Play**,

I often hear and read accusations that over the past few years, with particularly the rise of the popularity of online multiplayer, that gaming has been in a state of desperate and inescapable stagnation brought about by both financial constraints and pressures on developers and the seeming unwillingness of publishers to take any form of risk with their properties. I can see how one might see some validity in these arguments, however, October 2012 has squarely put them in their place.

This October we have seen a triumph of imagination and invention over stagnation. The release of two of the finest games not only of this generation but of any generation has seen fit to completely reinvigorate gaming for me.

I enjoy a first-person shooter as much as the next guy but with the growth of the now clichéd military brown blur and shallow machismo gaming had become, well, tiresomely predictable and so it is that *Dishonored* and *Assassin's Creed III* appear with a bold invention and fearlessness that is instantly refreshing.

Dishonored with its stark and bleak world riddled with plague and intrigue cannot help but compel and similarly *Assassin's Creed III*'s scope and ambition is plain for all to see. More importantly, both titles hold one idea over all others that has become more and more hard to find in other titles and that is the perfect balance of gameplay, mechanics, performance and style that make a game FUN to play. I remember having fun playing games. Hell, even the term itself is indicative. We play games to have fun, not for some tedious march through endless



cycles of repetition for some unlock or meaningless "reward".

I have played all the *Assassin's Creed* titles since their inception but the mountain of effort and dedication placed into III is apparent in it immediately and it is gripping stuff. *Dishonored* grabs you by the hair and shakes you from your FPS stupor. Invention, originality and fun are alive and well and kicking ass in the shape of these two games. I can only hope that they are the examples they deserve to be.

Yours sincerely,

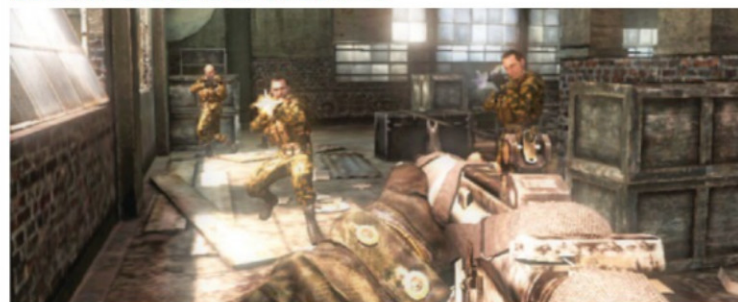
Niall Balmer

Well said. *Assassin's Creed III* has some of the problems of previous instalments, but it picked a setting that demanded more from the team at Ubisoft Montreal, and as such it reaps the rewards from being an innovative experience. It's actually fun to just exist in the world of *Assassin's Creed III*, and that's a rare thing indeed. *Dishonored* is an altogether more refined deal and is made unique by extraordinary design decisions – undoubtedly proof that not everything has to be a boring-looking first-person shooter, and that innovation can come from existing ideas.

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We take to our Facebook army made up of our nearest and dearest to ask...



Play

Ask us ANYTHING about PlayStation and you will probably see it in our December issue.

Like • Comment • Share • about an hour ago •

Paul Jones What happens if you put a vita in the microwave!?

Wayne Young I've been tempted to punch the screen of my vita on black ops and also on AC when I take the leap of faith and end up dying taking the wrong path! Will there ever be a casing that could protect the vita whilst punching it? It would making gaming more fun and less expensive having to replace the consoles...

Ian Dickson What's the most interesting thing you've ever balanced on top of your PS3?

Mitchell Sabbag Will the PS4 be able to run 60 FPS games at 1080p?

Nathan Jones Why is there not an option to change your online user ID/name! I hate my PSN ID username but want to keep my trophy info!

Peter Martin How much crossover will there be between PS3 and PS4?

Christy O'Toole To whom do I have to send threatening letters to get a little bit more hustle on Kingdom Hearts III development?

Thomas Davis Why do Sony keep redesigning the store to make it worse?

Megan Roaring Lyons Do you like green eggs and ham?

Play The answer to all these questions is 'Ken Kutaragi'.



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Peep the latest trailers and hottest gaming clips at youtube.com/NowGamerTube



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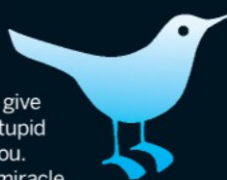
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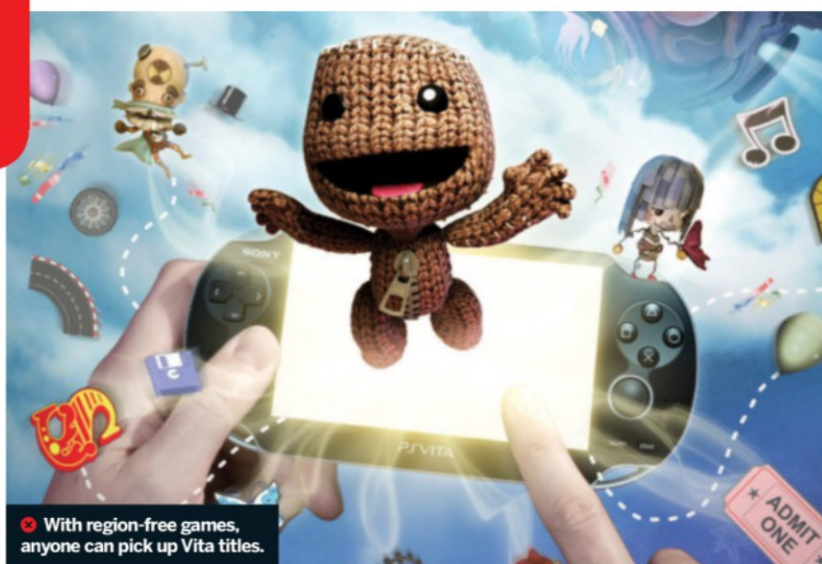
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Got something to talk about? Tell us on our forum: www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



Podcast

The **Play** team talks games every month
nowgamer.com/podcasts/nowgamer-podcasts/



VITA ANGER

Hi my precious **Play**,
Vita was the first thing that I preordered in my life, usually I just grab everything day one anyway, so I have Vita but nothing on it because I am from Slovakia, and my account doesn't have PlayStation Store but I am buying everything on my other Irish account but Sony decided that with Vita you can't share, you can't buy things from the Store and play them on different account like we do on PS3 (I understand why they have to do it – money) but because of this I can't download anything to my Vita from PS3, no Skype, no Facebook, no demos. So I won't buy another Vita for my brother until they switch off the button at Sony headquarters and allows these little things to happen for everyone – until then I won't buy anything from the Store. I don't need them, they need me, I am still busy on lunch breaks with *Everybody's Golf*, maybe your advice would be to change account on Vita but I don't want to play under a different account.

Fran, Ireland

Frustrating, isn't it? We're not fans of the new Vita system which means you have to flip Vita memory cards every time you want to access American account content, but at least we have a pretty decent PlayStation Store here. Internationally, it's a different deal – hopefully that's something Sony will start to address with time due to the negative response from fans.

NO LITTLEBIGPLANET KARTING FOR ME

I'm a HUGE fan of *LBP*. I'm on it all the time! But I was wondering if Media Molecule were going to make a *LittleBigPlanet 3* because I'm not interested in the karting. But I thought to myself why didn't Media



Molecule make a new *LBP* game that has 3D create mode, so that people can make racing games and still have all the elements from the previous games so there will be more variety in the levels.

Because looking at *LBP Karting* it seems the only things you can do are race and battle and that REALLY does not interest me.

Will, via email

Yeah, totally understand that, Will – and if you like traditional *LittleBigPlanet* gameplay, the Vita version may well be Sackboy's best adventure yet, offering an experience that actually builds on the console versions. As for *LittleBigPlanet Karting*, you might actually be surprised by how good it is – this isn't some half-baked piece of nonsense with the *LBP* name on it, this is a fantastic PS3 exclusive.

SHENMUE ON PS3

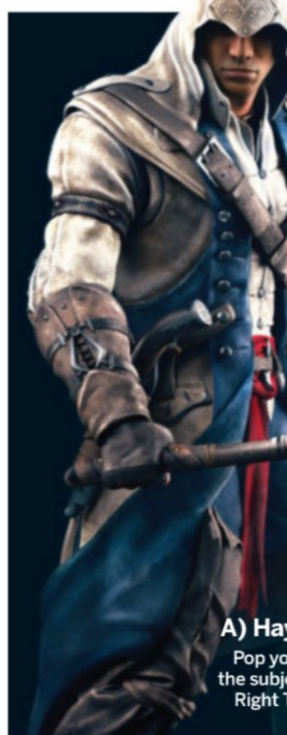
Hi **Play**,
Been looking extensively all over the web for an update on what's happening with the *Shenmue* series. However getting very limited information.

Can you please advise of any information at all regarding this game being released in HD on the PSN?

Thank you

Andy Reynolds

Soon is the answer, Andy – Sega is gradually working its way through the back catalogue of last-gen titles, and both *Shenmue* games are naturally high on everyone's lists, particularly ours. We can't wait to see Ryu Hazuki again, and we predict it'll happen in early 2013.



WIN AN ASSASSIN'S CREED III ART BOOK!

Courtesy of Titan Books, we're giving away one copy of *The Art Of Assassin's Creed III*, available now for £24.99. See pictures of bears chasing Connor! It looks rather lovely, actually, but it was the only thing we could find on our desks to give away. A great gift for any fan. Just answer this question to be in with a chance of winning:

WHAT'S THE NAME OF CONNOR'S FATHER IN ASSASSIN'S CREED III?

A) Haytham Kenway B) William Roache C) David Furnish

Pop your answer and address in an email to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject header 'Play Gave The Original Assassin's Creed Game 58% And Were Right To Do It'. Also email that address if you need a list of terms and conditions.





We ask you to ask us questions on Twitter, and then you do, and then we ignore you on Twitter and answer them here. It's the perfect system!

@KITTLE11 What's the biggest disappointment of this generation of consoles?
That *The Last Guardian* might never come out.

@GAMER_4_LYF What do you hope to see in the second generation of Vita game's and do you think PS Plus can help Vita survive into the next gen?
We hope to see more titles like *Gravity Rush*, unique exclusives that make the most of the hardware. A *God Of War* title would be nice, too. We'd also like to see less wussing out when it comes to Vita ports of big titles. PS Plus can only help the Vita's cause.

@MRWRIGHTY987 How hard would it be to build a Robo Bear that fires lasers from its eyes?
Easier than replacing the PS3 hard drive.

@THEKILLERBUNNY What's the wing speed velocity of a sparrow?
28MPH.

@ALKOGNIUZZ What's the difference between *GTA IV* and *GTA V*? Besides from the slightly improved graphics, multiple characters and story?
It has a 'V' at the end, not a 'IV'.

@WDANKS Why would you print this question?
Because it makes things easier when filling out this column.

@HELLO_CAMO What disappointed you the most (this generation)? For me it was the lack of true HD titles running at 1080p/60fps.
That didn't bother us too much, really. The lack of new ideas in big games does, though.

@ELITESACKBOY What's the meaning of life?
42. LOL! No, we hate *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*. The meaning of life? Well, let's see – it comes in creating something you're truly proud of.

@ADAM_ANOUER If the *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* franchise was made into a movie trilogy who would you want to direct it?
Someone who's worthy of its story. Like Michael Bay.

@DSOINX Who do you think is missing from the PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale roster?
Cloud, Lara Croft, Crash Bandicoot, Snake, the beach ball from *Kula World* and that gargoyle from *Primal*. It should also have a moving *WipeOut* track.

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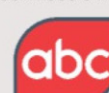
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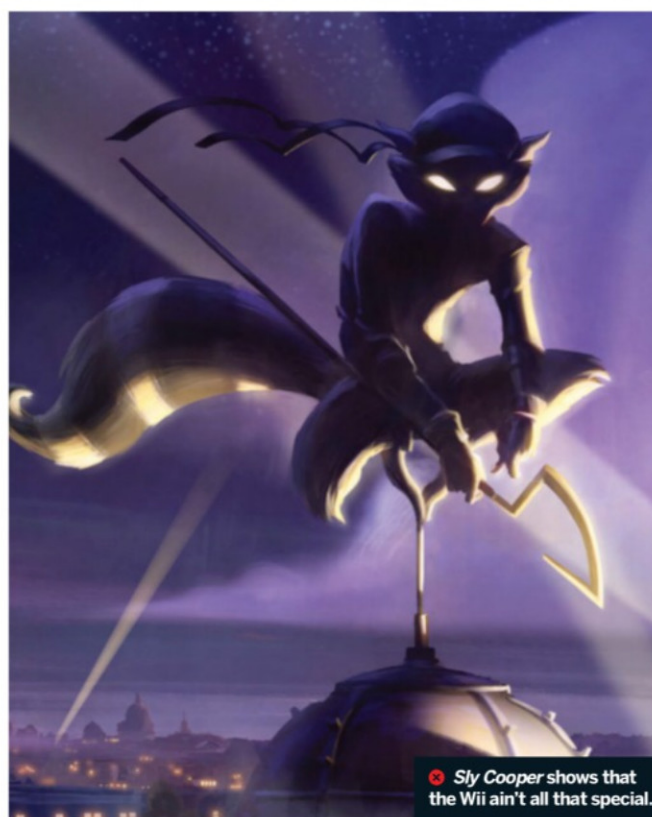


15,693
Jan-Dec 2011

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SLY COOPER BEATS WII U

With Wii U out now, it's at once reassuring and unsurprising to see Sony taking the bull by the horns and showing that it can pull off all the same tricks as the new Nintendo console. The chief gimmick of Nintendo's new hardware is the interaction between the controller/tablet hybrid GamePad but as many have pointed out, this isn't exactly anything new – the connectivity Sony has between PlayStation 3 and PS Vita already affords it exactly the same potential for creative gameplay. The first game to really push this on PlayStation will be *Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time*, Sanzuru Games' forthcoming sneaky cartoon adventure. Already announced as part of the CrossBuy program and with cross-platform save support allowing you to continue the adventure on the move, we now know it'll have Wii U-rivalling AR features as well. By pointing your Vita at the screen during gameplay, it can be used as an X-ray scanner – secrets hidden away in the game world are highlighted and then flagged up on the big screen to help you grab the lot. You can even snag them by taking pictures of them, if you're really struggling to get to them. It's not necessary to play or complete the game, yet it's a novel and tactile addition that should really give the game a unique sense of adventure.



Sly Cooper shows that the Wii ain't all that special.

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PREVIEWS

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



RELEASE DATE: 5 MARCH 2013

The core storyline of *Tomb Raider* will last for 12-15 hours.

Tomb Raider

Crystal Dynamics makes a Lara changes to its formula (arf!)

PS3 *Tomb Raider*, for us, is a series that never really felt like it reached its full potential. Given the amount of sequels and reboots over the years, we assume Crystal Dynamics and Square Enix agree. Why? Maybe because we lacked the hardware to show off Lara's best, erm, assets. Or maybe because of the titillation factor of their lead character dictated what direction the game went rather than creative instincts. Regardless of what happened in the past, reason and rationale seem to have prevailed and the new, gritty, upcoming *Tomb Raider* is the bowl of porridge even Goldilocks is satisfied with.

The new *Tomb Raider* isn't just a reboot in design and cinematography, it's a reboot in ideology. When Christopher Nolan took over the *Batman* films he set the film standard for hyper-realistic, gritty, new age origin stories. *Tomb Raider*

borrows heavily from this. In the same way that Nolan had to distance *Batman Begins* from the godawful 1997 *Batman And Robin*, Crystal Dynamics have had to undergo some introspection and move away from adolescent gun-toting comic book adventure. The series has done some serious growing up and that became ever more apparent the more we played through the game. *Tomb Raider* isn't a bold new step in the series' history, it's the product of a popular form of storytelling – a form of storytelling that is executed with deadly efficiency.

The game starts out with the new look Lara Croft (human-sized chest, no hot pants) washing up on an unknown island near Japan after her ship capsizes. She's alone, her crew mates are nowhere to be seen and she's got no survival equipment – she is just an archaeologist after all. After some wandering she sees her crew mates

on the shore questioning her whereabouts and debating what to do next, before she has a chance to shout out to make herself known she's clubbed on the head by a mystery man and dragged off to a Wolf Creek-type cave. Drifting in and out of consciousness, Lara sees piles of human cadavers and cryptic ritualistic shrines as she's dragged deeper and deeper into a tomb. Waking upside down, cocooned in rope, hanging next to other decomposed cocooned bodies, the player gets the first bit of action. You have to use the left sick to swing side to side to catch on fire to burn the ropes and free Lara from captivity. Freeing Lara is a double-edged sword however as Lara lands directly on a spike, which pierces her abdomen. Attempting to escape the tomb, ingenuity becomes Lara's greatest weapon. Scaling walls and using the environment to make new paths are all part of her arsenal. After evading the

mystery man twice, who insists that he is only trying to help her, she dramatically climbs out of the tomb and falls to her knees in the middle of the rainforest in an epic opening finale.

What's interesting about this game is that the plot is not clear from the outset. You don't know who the mystery man is, you don't know where exactly you are and you don't know how to get off of the island. As the plot unfolds Lara encounters more unknown enemies, more artifacts and more evidence, which suggests there's something sinister afoot. It's an interesting way of telling a story; most games will set out who the bad guys are and who the good guys are, with some plot twists here and there. But with *Tomb Raider* the player is entirely in the dark, alongside Lara. It's almost as if, outside of survival, there is no plot. We played three solid hours and we couldn't confidently say who the bad guys were that were shooting at us, and why they're on the island. It makes *Tomb Raider* very suspenseful, by the end of the demo we were slightly less in the dark, context-wise but nowhere near unravelling the carefully crafted web of drama. >



Just because it's a reboot, that doesn't mean gigantic changes.

LARA RETURNS



Q&A WITH CRYSTAL DYNAMICS' CREATIVE BIG DAWG NOAH HUGHES

Noah Hughes, creative director

SO WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO REBOOT THE FRANCHISE, AND NOT CONTINUE WITH THE SERIES?

We wanted to make sure that we did something fresh for the fans whilst inviting new people into the franchise. We were really keen on providing an experience that people feel they haven't played before and we're confident we did this. There was almost an obligation to do something that felt like people hadn't played before, it was important that we took some time to make creative choices that were fresh and different. The origin story really came from wanting to flesh out Lara's character a bit more, there's a real person under there, you know, and we wanted to show people who she was and where she had come from – taking them on the journey along with her.

LARA'S ACROBATICS AND USE OF A FAUX DETECTIVE MODE STYLE ARE SIMILAR TO *UNCHARTED* AND *BATMAN ARKHAM CITY*, WOULD YOU SAY YOU LOOKED TO THOSE GAMES FOR INSPIRATION?

We're inspired by all games, especially games in the action adventure genre. It wasn't necessarily about borrowing ideas but making sure we're up-to-date with our combat and movement system, which we felt like we'd fallen behind in. What's important is that it's still uniquely *Tomb Raider*, for example Lara doesn't stick to cover, she can move around and navigate between cover. There's also a really strong narrative, which Naughty Dog are really good at particularly good at doing. We wanted to show that we're just as good at telling stories.

ARE THERE ANY SPECIAL FEATURES EXCLUSIVE TO THE PLAYSTATION?

No. We wanted to provide a similar experience for everyone.

WHAT DLC CAN WE EXPECT?

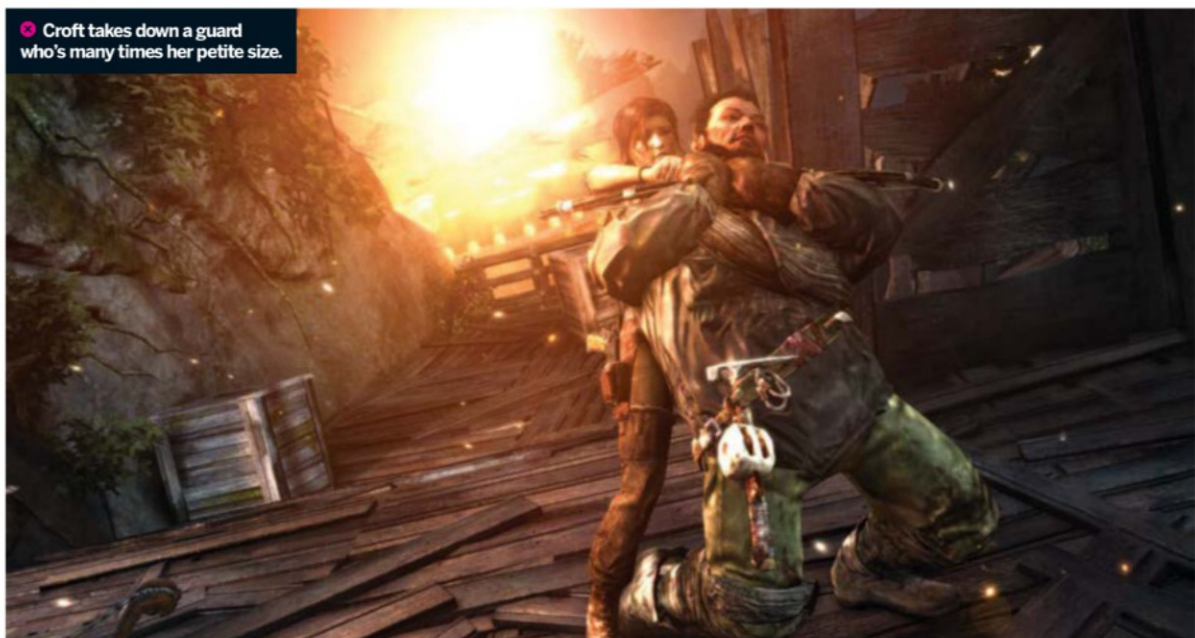
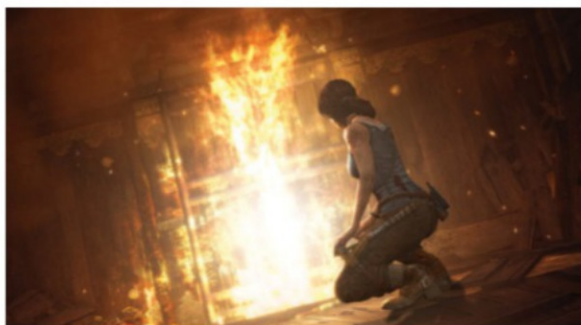
I don't think I'm allowed to talk about DLC.

The PR woman gives a stern look and tells us to wrap up the interview

IS THERE ANYTHING COMING OUT ON THE PS VITA?

There are no plans yet.

PREVIEW



✳️ Croft takes down a guard who's many times her petite size.



✳️ Covered in dirt and blood, this isn't the Lara we're used to.



✳️ PETA probably won't be massive fans of Lara after this scenario.



✳️ Lara's ordeals in the story will make her stronger in the long run.



❖ Lara's expressions say it all about her deadly new situation.

> The cinematography of this is truly outstanding, it's nothing like you've ever seen in other *Tomb Raider* games. It's like playing a series of interactive cutscenes that get more and more harrowing as the plot unfolds. QTEs feature regularly, which is probably a way of making sure the gamer doesn't spend 30 per cent of their *Tomb Raider* experience watching Lara just about make it out of a life-threatening situation. QTEs have caused controversy in the past, with some labelling them as lazy development, but if you've ever played the *Shenmue* series you'll know that they can add an incredible sense of urgency to a situation.

Crystal Dynamics want to keep you wide eyed throughout the game. As with other adventure/artifact-finding games, it's easy to get bogged down with trawling through vast frontiers looking for a miniscule key that you think you saw some three levels ago and can't progress without. *Turok* was one of the worst repeat offenders of this. Those moments do exist in *Tomb Raider* but they've been scaled down to finding necessary items within your vicinity and you'll usually be interrupted by some wolves on the prowl, thank god. This will be refreshing for some gamers who may have heard rumours that the game is completely open world. Despite what the PR people told us, the sandbox element to this game is actually pretty minimal. The

story unfolds the same way regardless of what you do. But you can change how easily you tackle each objective with how you upgrade Lara using XP you've gained from killing animals, or picking up informative/useful items.

The fun doesn't come from humorous back and forths with colleagues like *Uncharted*, nor does it come from finding every possible collectable item in the game like *Arkham City*, no. The fun comes from the exhaustingly gut-wrenching struggle that is Lara's life on the island. Every objective will kill her just a little bit more, every encounter is a near-death experience and every other second your senses are deep fried with some Michael Bay-esque Hollywood action. By the end you'll end up feeling jaded, alone and hungry for more.

There are, however, downsides to all of the blockbuster action. We call these 'reality fails', where you'll notice moments in the game that simply don't make sense. We imagine that the gut-wrenching Hollywood stuff we were yammering on about earlier acts as a distraction to the moments of pure bafflement. For example, at the start of the game there's that scene where Lara falls onto a spike and pierces her abdomen, which probably needs immediate medical attention. Granted, she doesn't have access to this, but she's able to continue throughout the entire game

without addressing it in any way. We didn't see any "we can rebuild her" bionic woman footage at the start so we can only assume she's still a human being.

Shortly after tearing apart her intestine, she finds a satchel belonging to one of her crew mates lying on the ground. She rummages through it, taking with her the walkie talkie and some kind of journal. Yet she leaves behind two bottles of water and the satchel itself, which Ray Mears says is essential in the jungle for collecting berries and grubs. Ignore Ray Mears at your own peril we say. Some moments later, Lara, gasping for water, cups her hands together and drinks some rainwater. Obviously, the two bottles of cheap pop weren't good enough for madam.

The Hollywoodness of the game naturally feeds into the controls and gameplay. Lara can move freely between cover without 'sticking' to it, which is a nice detraction from playing a game of peek-a-boo as you try to get into cover in other third-person shooters. Similarly, monkeying around on rock faces or climbing through a building has a hint of automation to it, but still requires some timing and the occasional QTE. The most interesting new feature though is what's called "survival instinct" which, when activated by pressing a button, highlights interesting objects in Lara's immediate vicinity. Basically it's very similar to

Batman's detective mode or Ezio's Eagle Sight. You'll need this less and less as you begin to understand how fire, water, other elements and the environment can be used to your advantage. Brutal pickaxe melees, stealth kills with a bow and arrow and machine gun carnage all play a vital part in the combat action too. The shooting takes little to no mastering and you can upgrade some of your melee weapons to a point that they administer death in fewer and fewer blows. Nice and economical.

All in all, this is a whole new experience for fans of the franchise. The character is different, the gameplay is different and the plot is like nothing seen in the series before. Let's be clear, these are changes for the good. Changes that were desperately needed. *Tomb Raider* had become predictable, dated and stagnant. The latest instalment is the antithesis to all of that. After playing for three hours and completing the demo we were hungry for more, even if we'd just gotten a A4 piece of paper explaining how the story ends we'd have been happy. That's what the power of suspense does, it consumes you, overstimulates you and leaves you desensitised to the point where bungee jumping feels like afternoon tea with Mrs. Hyacinth Bucket. As the demo finished the story was just beginning to unfold and there's clearly a lot more to experience, so you can expect to be satisfied. With more development to be done and an angle on Lara's character that hits hard, expect *Tomb Raider* to be the surprise hit of 2013.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

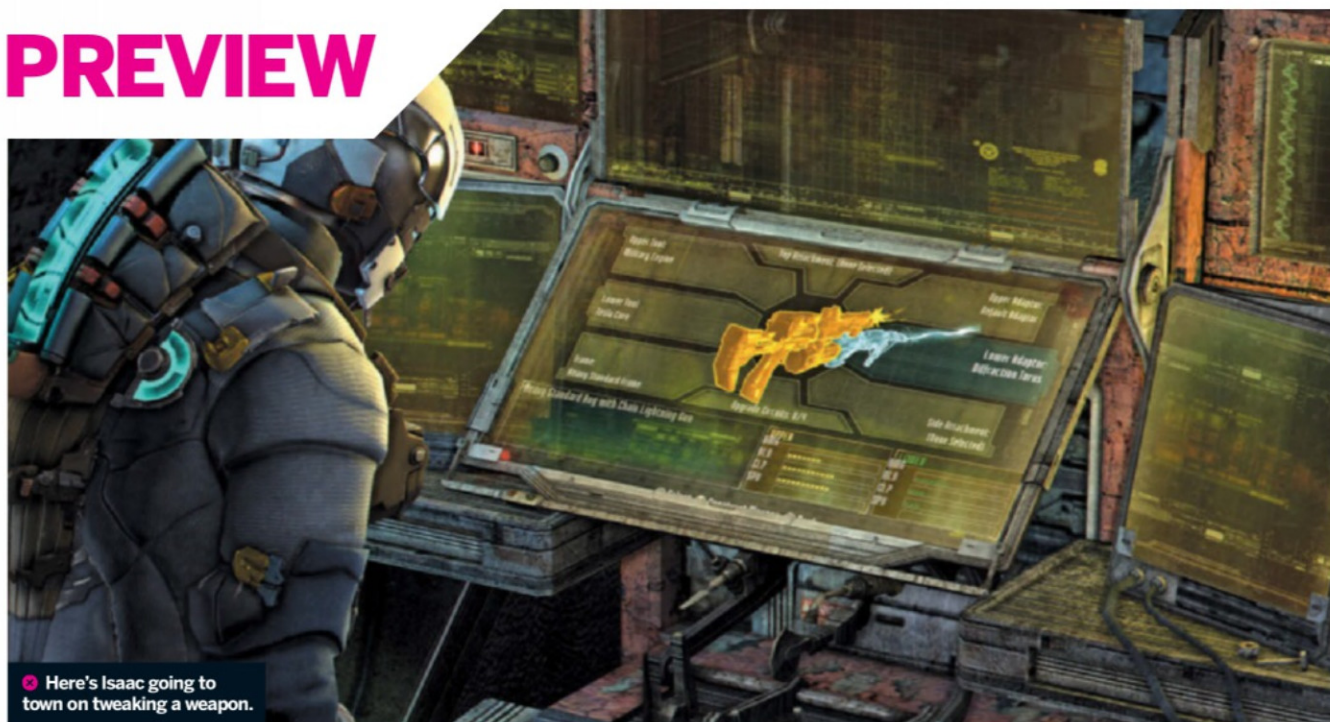
- ❖ The grandiose cinematography will please movie buffs
- ❖ Getting a headshot with a bow and arrow is a new, addictive, experience
- ❖ Lara's voice acting adds an element of unintentional comedy
- ❖ You'll be completely immersed from start to finish

READ ME

Tomb Raider is the long-awaited next entry in the series, taking Lara Croft back to her roots in an epic adventure of survival on a deadly island. Call it a reboot, yeah?

Tomb Raider is being published by Square Enix and developed by Crystal Dynamics, developers of the last four *Tomb Raider* games. For more information go to www.tombraider.com

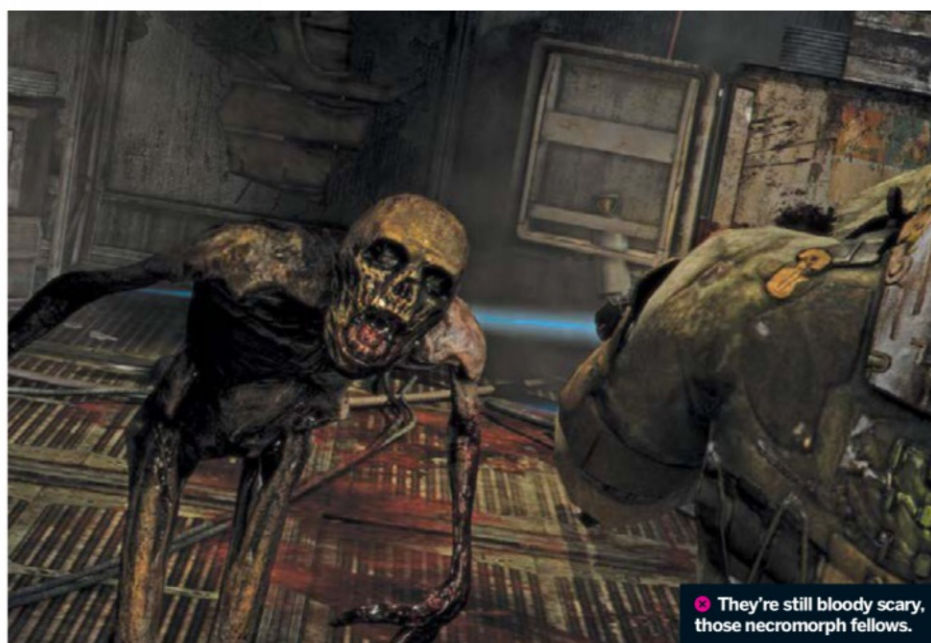
PREVIEW



✦ Here's Isaac going to town on tweaking a weapon.



✦ Could this be the last in Isaac's trilogy of titles?



✦ They're still bloody scary, those necromorph fellows.



DEAD SPACE: A SERIES IN FOUR LINES

Curious about Dead Space's progression between sequels? We've broken it down for you in four sentences

DEAD SPACE

Wow, survival horror does still exist, and it's really good!

DEAD SPACE: IGNITION

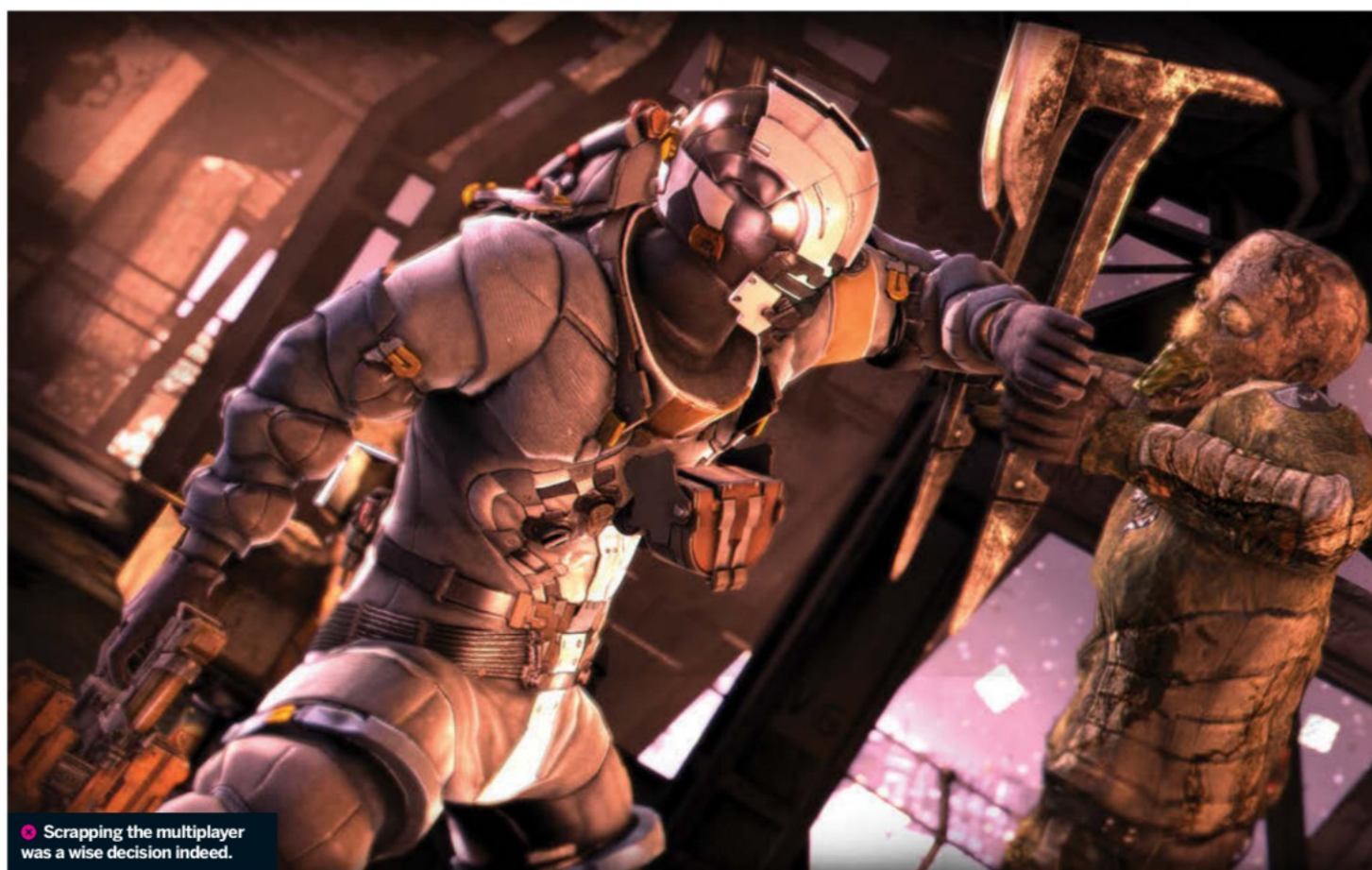
This is ass.

DEAD SPACE 2

Isaac talks: please stop him talking.

DEAD SPACE: EXTRACTION

Remember when lightgun games were big?



✦ Scrapping the multiplayer was a wise decision indeed.



RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2013

Dead Space 3

Executive producer Steve Papoutsis on why co-op really works for the survival horror series



When *Dead Space 3* was revealed with co-op, there was a concerned reaction from fans. Did you expect this reaction?

To be honest when we sat down to unveil the game at E3 we thought there was a couple of ways we could go. We could show what we'd shown before for a *Dead Space* game, and players would probably feel 'Oh, it's just another *Dead Space* game'. Or we could show the innovations we were bringing to the franchise, so we opted to do that. We showed a bunch of new stuff: exteriors of Tau Volantis, new enemies, human enemies, a giant boss, an epic sequence with the giant drill – we showed a lot of new stuff.

What we wanted to do was show new stuff and show people that we are evolving the franchise. The addition of co-op on its own – a lot of people are going to have questions about it, we knew that was going to happen. But hopefully by showing people the game [at events] they can see with co-op that we're taking it in a very *Dead Space* direction and we're innovating with a feature that nobody's ever done before.

Are you concerned people will just play through single-player only? A lot of thought and content has clearly gone into co-op.

Absolutely. That's one of the challenges when we started the game – we knew that we were going to make content that some people just weren't going to look at because they just don't want to play co-op. That's okay. It's their loss, because they're missing out on some of the cool stuff that the team's done.

But hopefully when people see it, read about it, hear about it on a forum and read about how our co-op actually works and how it's actually additive through an article like this, people will become more interested and want to play with their friends. One of the goals with adding co-op was to have people be able to experience *Dead Space* with a friend – the feeling of going to a horror movie with someone.

You can go to a horror movie with somebody and you can both be really into it, it's tense and you're on the edge of your seat, or you could go with a friend and you'd be drinking your sodas and eating

popcorn and laughing but having a great time – we wanted players to be able to experience the game in a number of different ways.

So are you confident it will retain the same level of horror as the previous games, even with co-op?

I think it's going to be similar in terms of what people say at the end. Some people think *Dead Space* is really scary, some people don't think *Dead Space* is really scary – if you read forums you'll see a varying opinion. It's very subjective. I'm not going to make a claim that it's the scariest game or it's not the scariest game – it's up to the individual. The most important thing for us is that we're making a *Dead Space* game – a *Dead Space* game is composed of many things, survival, horror, tension, action, immersiveness and atmosphere. All of those things.

When did you look at co-op? Was it something you considered after *Dead Space 2*?

Co-op was something we even talking about with the original *Dead Space*. At one point quite late in development we had the engineering

team set it up so we could play the game in co-op – at that point all we had was another Isaac, it literally was a tacked-on Isaac, and we ran a test and we thought 'this could be kind of cool'. But we weren't going to do that unless that character had a meaningful story and was integrated into the story – we couldn't deliver co-op on that game at the level that we wanted to, so we didn't do it.

The decision to make Isaac speak split the audience somewhat – how do you feel it's worked out?

That's another one of those decisions that's born out of the story and what's happening. My feeling was I thought it made a lot of sense in *Dead Space* that Isaac didn't talk, because there weren't a lot of people to talk to; he's not going to go around talking to himself, that would be weird.

In *Dead Space 2* he's around a lot more characters, plus he's got a lot on his mind – and he's kind of pissed off that he's been incarcerated and they're pulling shit out of his head, so he's got some things to say. That was a natural evolution of the character, just like showing his face more often – we wanted to develop more back story around Isaac, more personality around him.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's still *Dead Space* – the fundamentals remain pretty much the same
- The co-op is altering the series experience in a positive way from what we've seen so far

- Weapons customisation is more in-depth, which is reassuring
- Maybe Isaac will finally get around to sorting his psychological issues out

READ ME

Dead Space 3 is the final part of the *Isaac Trilogy*. We don't know if it's actually called that, as we just made it up.

Visceral has an official site here: www.visceralgames.com

PREVIEW

RELEASE DATE: SPRING 2013

Lost Planet 3



We chat to producer Andrew Szymanski about why Capcom's icy franchise is built for change

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ *Lost Planet* is a series that manages to rewrite its own rule book between entries
- ❑ The focus on scares is a good move, putting it in a kind of *Dead Space*-y realm
- ❑ Pilot an absolutely massive mech stomping things and threaten the native wildlife
- ❑ It's inspired by *The Thing*, one of the best movies ever.

Spark Unlimited is making *Lost Planet 3* in conjunction with Capcom. Read more here: www.sparkunlimited.com

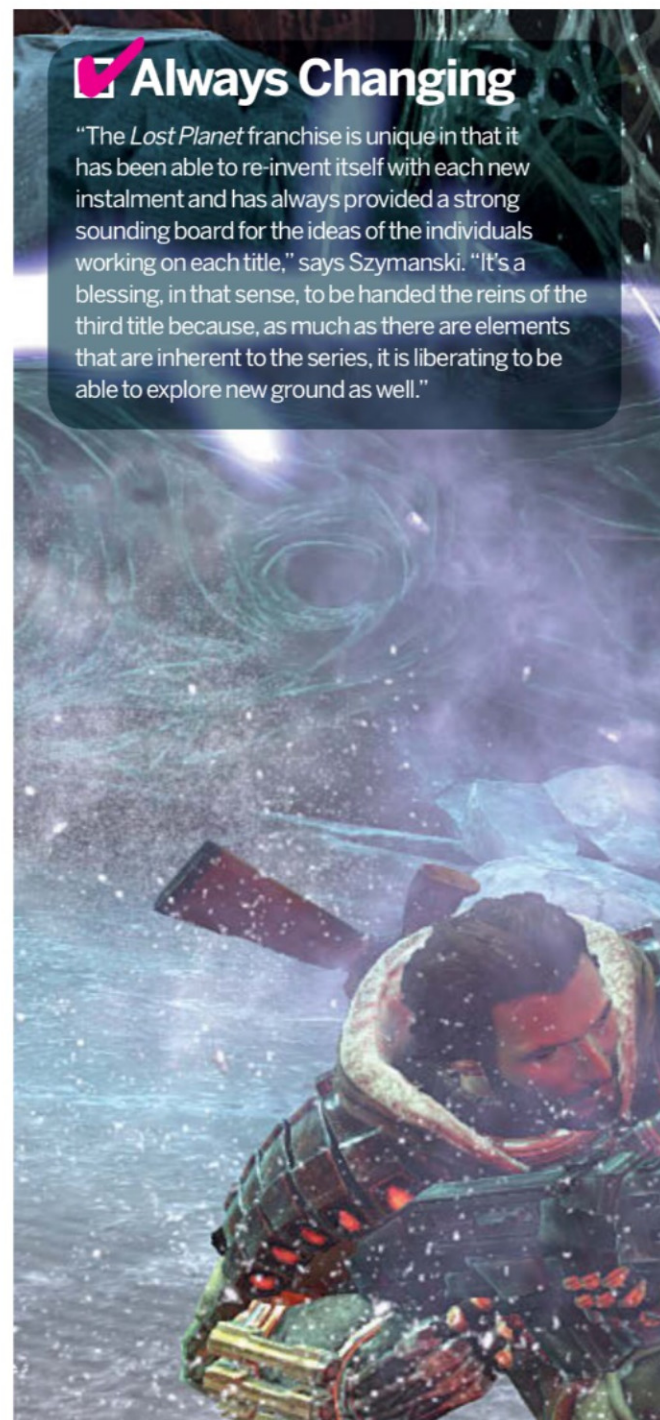


READ ME

Lost Planet 3 is a third-person shooter from Capcom, and is the latest in a long line of joint projects with Western developers.

Always Changing

"The *Lost Planet* franchise is unique in that it has been able to re-invent itself with each new instalment and has always provided a strong sounding board for the ideas of the individuals working on each title," says Szymanski. "It's a blessing, in that sense, to be handed the reins of the third title because, as much as there are elements that are inherent to the series, it is liberating to be able to explore new ground as well."



East Vs West

Although some gamers have given the idea of Western developers making games for Eastern publishers a contentious response, Szymanski is confident that it'll yield positive results for *Lost Planet 3*. "Obviously as someone who chose a Western developer to work on the *Lost Planet* franchise, I am a proponent of the idea. The key is to begin the process with collaboration in mind. It is all too easy, particularly with established franchises, to assume that the franchise holder knows all of the answers and is always right."





✓ Prequel Territory

Set 20 years before the other games, *Lost Planet 3* finds the planet of EDN-III in a rather wild state. "Lost Planet 3 takes place on a version of EDN-III that has been untamed by man," says Szymanski. "The colonists (including Jim, the protagonist) must utilise every tool and technique available to eke out an existence in the harsh environment. This can be seen by the use of the Utility Rig – unlike the Vital Suits seen in *LP1* and *2*, it was not designed as a weapon and thus is equipped only with its original construction-minded tools."

✗ Open World

Lost Planet is sort of open world – but not quite. "I understand the use of the term to some extent, as one of our goals for *LP3* was to show the scale of the planet by giving the player a wide variety of areas to explore through a system of interconnected 'hub-and-spoke' locations," Szymanski says. "However, to avoid confusion, *LP3* is not structured as a 'go anywhere and do anything at any time' style of game along the lines of *GTA* or *Skyrim*."

✓ Here's The Thing

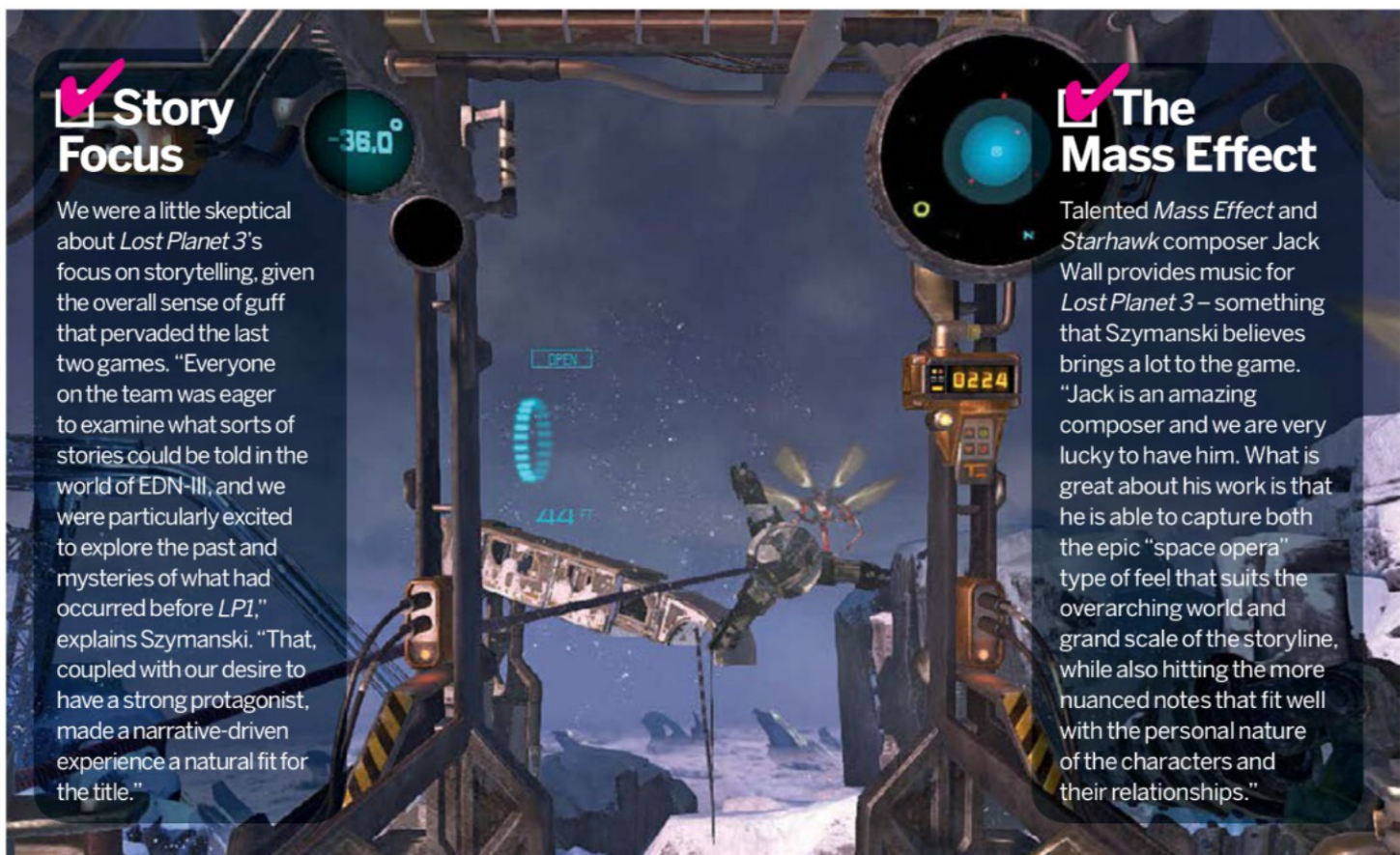
The biggest pop culture inspiration for *Lost Planet 3* is John Carpenter's version of *The Thing*, in which an alien takes on the form of humans, amid the snow. "All of us on the *Lost Planet 3* team are fans of classic science fiction, and you will find a lot of influences from films, novels, and other games," says Szymanski. "Specifically, in designing the game world we took a lot of inspiration from *The Thing* (of course, given the setting) as well as the atmosphere of the original *Alien* film for some of our more suspenseful internal areas."

✓ Story Focus

We were a little skeptical about *Lost Planet 3*'s focus on storytelling, given the overall sense of guff that pervaded the last two games. "Everyone on the team was eager to examine what sorts of stories could be told in the world of EDN-III, and we were particularly excited to explore the past and mysteries of what had occurred before *LP1*," explains Szymanski. "That, coupled with our desire to have a strong protagonist, made a narrative-driven experience a natural fit for the title."

✓ The Mass Effect

Talented *Mass Effect* and *Starhawk* composer Jack Wall provides music for *Lost Planet 3* – something that Szymanski believes brings a lot to the game. "Jack is an amazing composer and we are very lucky to have him. What is great about his work is that he is able to capture both the epic 'space opera' type of feel that suits the overarching world and grand scale of the storyline, while also hitting the more nuanced notes that fit well with the personal nature of the characters and their relationships."





RELEASE DATE: TBA 2013

Lone Survivor

True survival horror returns to PlayStation



Lone Survivor comes from the mind of Jasper Byrne, a one-man indie darling, and this year his idiosyncratic survival horror went down a storm on PC – so much so that Curve Studio is now adapting it for PS3 and Vita. An homage to horror games like *Silent Hill*, *Lone Survivor* will go down a treat with PS3 gamers who have felt that horror games have fallen by the wayside in an era of Chris Redfield powering zombie faces into walls and beating up rocks with his bare fists.

Essentially a 2D horror adventure, mostly composed of corridor-navigating and surviving against monsters created by a sinister outbreak, *Lone Survivor*'s story and art direction are our two favourite things about it. There's a David Lynch influence to certain environments and atmospheric touches within the world, that mixture of the bizarre and the scary that help make *Lone Survivor* distinctive, earning its scares.

The story itself certainly comes from the *Silent Hill* school of unraveling personal mysteries – with a terrific script and pixelated graphics, *Lone Survivor* feels pure, and certainly benefits from being the work of one man. What it represents in terms of crossing over to PlayStation is reiterating Sony's new approach of reeling in these cool PC indie titles to Vita and PS3, following the release of *Retro City Rampage* (which we'll be taking a look at next month).

It was also rumoured that the well-received *Hotline Miami* would be making its way over to Vita as well, and for owners of the handheld, these types of games are the kind of hardcore-skewed titles that the console exists for. *Lone Survivor* should be the peak of this new approach, and at some point next year we'll be able to sample that first hand on PSN.

Read more about *Lone Survivor* at www.lonesurvivor.co.uk.

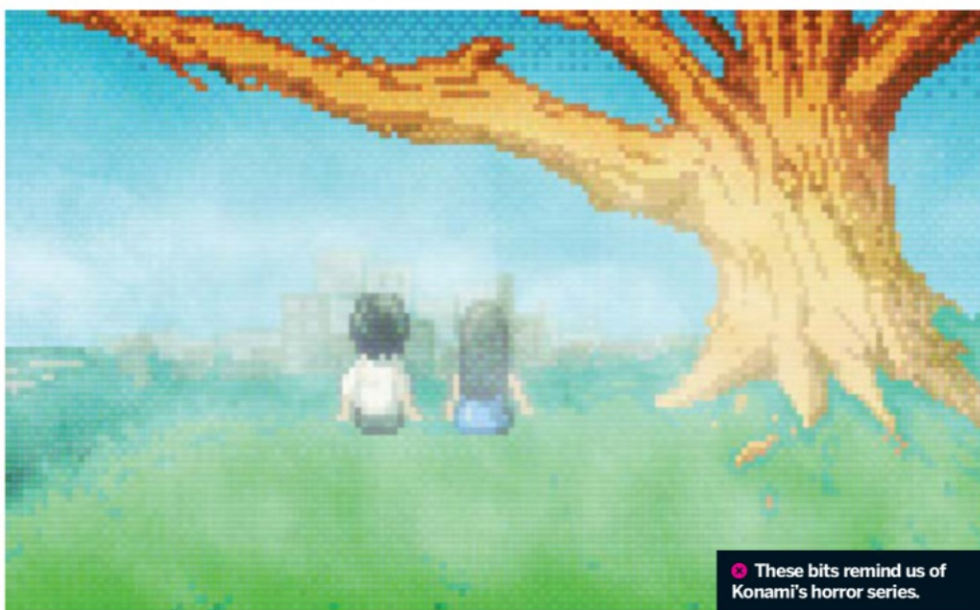
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's a cool PC indie game coming to PlayStation. YES!
- It's on both PS3 and Vita, which is lovely
- An homage to a lot of horror games you've probably played
- Made by one man. And it's good!

READ ME

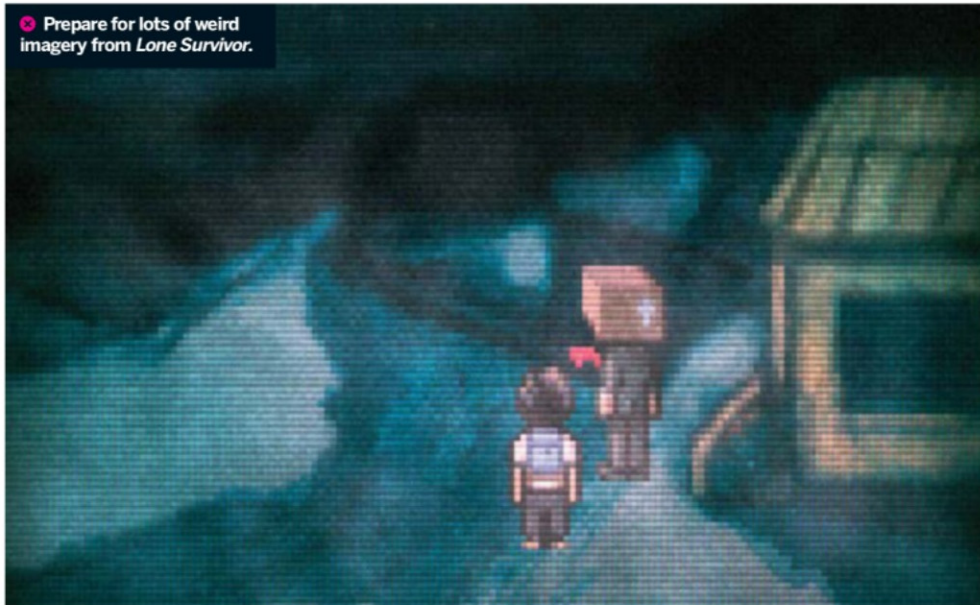
Lone Survivor cost \$10 on Steam when released on PS3, so expect a similar £6-9 price tag when it releases on PS3.

While simple, the visual style works very well.

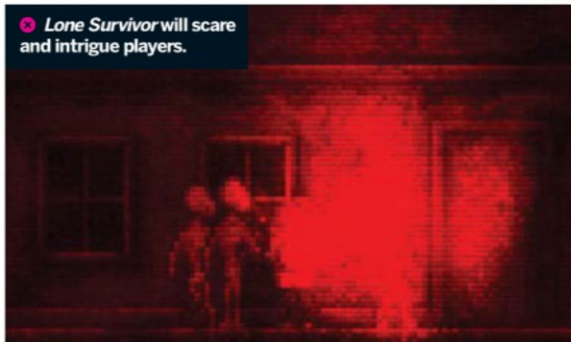


These bits remind us of Konami's horror series.

Prepare for lots of weird imagery from *Lone Survivor*.



Lone Survivor will scare and intrigue players.



HILL STREET BLUES

What *Lone Survivor* owes to Konami

WITHOUT SPOILING ANYTHING, it's obvious that Byrne has been influenced by the way *Silent Hill 2*'s story plays out, with main character James' difficult relationship with his wife lauded as one of the most mature tales ever seen in a videogame. It's no bad thing that *Lone Survivor* borrows from that.

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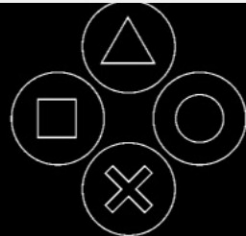
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2013
IN
PLAYSTATION





METAL GEAR SOLID REBORN

METAL GEAR SOLID IS THE KING OF REINVENTING ITSELF – AND GROUND ZEROES MIGHT BE THE MOST AMBITIOUS PS3 TITLE YET, EXPECTED TO LAUNCH AT THE CLIMAX OF ITS LIFESPAN WHILE REDRAWING THE TEMPLATE OF WHAT WE EXPECT FROM THE TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION SERIES. WE EXPLORE WHY GROUND ZEROES MAY REPRESENT THE SHAPE OF WHAT'S TO COME...



He's not old, that's just Kojima's new lightning at work.

Every generation has those late titles that come to define what a console is capable of. For PS2, it was *Final Fantasy XII*, *Okami*, *Shadow Of The Colossus*, *San Andreas*, *Bully*, *Resident Evil 4* (alright, maybe we should let the Gamecube have that one), *God Of War II* and *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*. They're the direct products of veteran developers understanding console technology, and how to maximise the possibilities that experience with it brings. In a few years, we'll no doubt be talking about *Dishonored*, *GTA V*, *Skyrim*, maybe *The Last Of Us* and *Beyond: Two Souls* in the same breath, too. *Metal Gear Solid: Ground Zeroes*, arriving so late in the console generation, may well be the PS3 title that sums up the PS3 technically and creatively. A bold reinvention of the series that sees it go open world for the first time, *Ground Zeroes* represents Hideo Kojima's greatest attempt yet to challenge himself as a game designer.

Elements of *Ground Zeroes* can be found in previous *Metal Gear* titles. While none can quite be categorised as open world, *MGS* is a series that encourages a variation of approaches, from *Shadow Moses'* multiple routes around levels to *Snake Eater's* nature-rife jungle hubs; *MGS4* took this idea further, with battlefields you could either bypass completely, or join in and affect the way the scenario plays out, subtly manipulating the experience into something very un-*Metal Gear*.

And that's why we love Kojima Productions. It'll always be the first to try something against the grain of established mechanics, and as a result, no two *Metal Gear* games have ever been the same (see 'Shifting Gears'). *Ground Zeroes* is an interquel between *Peace Walker* and *Metal Gear Solid 5*, which Kojima has been frank about – with the opening of a Kojima Productions offshoot in Los Angeles, too, it seems that Konami is staffing up to take on *Metal Gear* projects on a more effective timetable, which seems commercially sensible when you consider that it's been almost five years since *MGS4* came out, and we've only seen *Peace Walker* released during that time while *Rising* languished in development hell. The LA studio is being assembled to oversee the development of multiplayer for *Metal Gear* as well, after the lukewarmly-received *Metal Gear Online* fell out of favour with Western players. >



METAL GEAR SOLID 5: WHAT WE NEED TO SEE

GROUND ZEROES IS JUST THE PRELUDE TO MGS5 – HERE'S OUR WISHLIST FOR KOJIMA'S NEXT INSTALMENT...

1 FREEDOM

Each *Metal Gear Solid* has expanded in the direction of more sandbox-y type gameplay, and that's what we'd like to see in future *Metal Gear* games. *Ground Zeroes* will touch on this, but *MGS5* should take the principles of open world design and apply them to a traditional stealth action title.

2 THE FALL OF BIG BOSS

This appears to be the arc of the Big Boss games in the series – the eyepatched soldier's eventual collapse towards being a dictator, after which his genetic son, Solid Snake, will stop him. We now wait to see Big Boss live long enough to become the series' villain.

3 LES ENFANTS TERRIBLES

Speaking of Snake, we can't see Kojima resisting the opportunity to bring back EVA and explore the time that leads to the birth of both Solid and Liquid Snakes, as well as the factors that led to their creation. That's surely something fans are interested in being explored with the next title.

4 OCELOT!

We want to see his transition from precocious gunslinger to veteran badass, and Kojima will no doubt relish the opportunity to show him being a little older and grouchier. Ocelot and Snake have unfinished business and a mutual respect – will Kojima pick this up in the next game?

5 COHERENT MULTIPLAYER

Metal Gear Online was a mess, not in design, but in interface – it was almost presented in a walled garden of online play, and felt so detached from *MGS4* that Western gamers didn't really connect with it. You can bet your ass (and ours) that they'll sort this out in the fifth game.



Snake won't be alone in his all-new tale of military conflict.



Can you believe this will run on your PS3? Amazing.



Another iconic villain for the series' roster, no doubt.

> Simply put, *Metal Gear* is one of Konami's big earners – it needs more entries in this series, and unlike *Assassin's Creed* or *Call Of Duty*, the company can actually get away with franchising *Metal Gear* further, since there's still so much unexplored background to the series' labyrinthine narrative. Right now, it's halfway through the story of the icon at the centre of the entire mythos. *Ground Zeroes* takes place as Big Boss (AKA Naked Snake) has formed the military state of Outer Heaven – meanwhile, sneaky femme fatale Paz is DOA following the final battle with Metal Gear ZEKE in *Peace Walker*, and she'll play a role in this story.

At the start of *Ground Zeroes*, we'll see Big Boss dispatched to rescue Paz and war survivor kid Chico from the enigmatic organisation XOF, ran by a scarred man who resembles Volgin from *Metal Gear Solid 3*. For some reason, Chico can now plug headphones into his chest, which is a bit nasty to look at as he sits in his cage at the game's Camp Omega setting.

Solid Snake's Outer Heaven soldier state is still in precarious condition, and is under threat in this

new instalment. In many ways, *Ground Zeroes* appears to be a direct sequel to *Peace Walker*, so if you haven't played the handheld spin-off or its HD version re-release, now might just be the time. Given *Metal Gear*'s tendency to throw in story aspects without explanation across previous instalments, we're likely to see many aspects of *Peace Walker* picked up again in this entry.

The idea of it being an open world title won't necessarily translate into a *Skryim* or *GTA*-style experience – rather, the world of *Ground Zeroes* is broken up into extended hubs, as the day and night cycle transforms the environments and encourages you to revisit locations. Areas are broken up by loading screens, as with previous *Metal Gear Solid* entries, so while *Ground Zeroes* may foster new types of ways to play, this already puts it into a slightly different league from, say, a Rockstar open world game. It's an open world title built to accentuate the stealth mechanics that *Metal Gear Solid* is famous for, so it'll be a fascinating transition for Kojima Productions as the developer adapts to this idea.



“Metal Gear is one of Konami’s big earners – it needs more entries in this series, and unlike Assassin’s Creed or Call Of Duty, the company can actually get away with franchising Metal Gear further”



Yet building on the expanded battlefield ideas from *MGS4* will yield positive results from *Ground Zeroes*, as messing in Kojima’s playground is what’s always appealed about the franchise. What’s interesting here is that the base idea from *Peace Walker* is being expanded – you’ll be able to land a helicopter on your own Outer Heaven in real-time and wander around, a nice shift from the menu-based stuff we saw in the PSP title. You can customise the base to your preferences, too, which is bound to allow for some Kojima-style oddities in the way you can present it. Like with *Peace Walker*, though, this strand is entirely optional. There’s also the possibility that players will be able to access their base through their mobile phones – Kojima has alluded to this concept without revealing specifics on how it will exactly work.

Like the wait for *Metal Gear Solid 4*, however, and in keeping with the developer’s history of keeping players in the dark and surprising them at the last minute with, say, a second protagonist with long blonde hair, *Ground Zeroes* is all potential right now. When you infiltrate Camp

Omega, how you pull it off comes down to your choices. Like *Guns Of The Patriots*, the range of assault options available will allow a more anti-stealth philosophy than the series is traditionally renowned for, including military vehicles like jeeps – yet, at the same time, if you manage to circumvent all the guards in the base and stay stealthy, the game will recognise that and reward you.

Ground Zeroes is posited as the most open *Metal Gear Solid* to date, then, not just in sprawling environments but in approach; it almost sounds the game *Peace Walker* could’ve been if it was built for home consoles to begin with, rather than compressed for a handheld, with the idea of an overarching game world broken into hubs you can revisit for different missions. This is an extension of those ideas,

brought to life with the revolutionary FOX Engine, which makes *Ground Zeroes* the first in a new potential era of extraordinarily ambitious *Metal Gear Solid* games.

The fact that it’s been deliberately announced as setting the stage for *Metal Gear Solid 5* is itself a declaration of intent; that *Metal Gear* still has a long way to go, and that there are still many ideas within the DNA of the series that Kojima feels he hasn’t explored properly. *Ground Zeroes* may be the PS3’s crowning achievement, as well as a taste of what’s to come on next-gen, as existing franchises are overhauled to take advantage of the PS4. Hideo Kojima is a master game designer – while someday, we’d be fascinated to see him tackle a new IP, we’re far from done with Snake.

Check back in the next issue of **Play**, where we’ll have a massive hands-on with a near-finished version of *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*!

2013

IN

PLAYSTATION

FROM THE LIKELY LAUNCH OF NEW HARDWARE TO AN ENDLESS STREAM OF AMAZING GAMES, THIS YEAR'S GOING TO BE A FANTASTIC ONE FOR PLAYSTATION...

PLAYSTATION 4

Games consoles change forever

PLENTY ARE EXPECTING Sony to move into the next generation in 2013 with PlayStation 4. Dev kits are supposedly out in the wild and major developers are keeping tight-lipped on major new projects. But is it the right time?

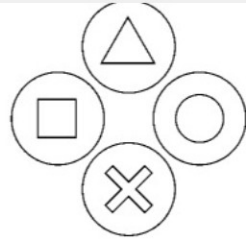
PlayStation 3 is just coming into its stride. It's a complete entertainment hub catered towards a variety of audiences: from *Wonderbook* through to *God Of War*. It's a Blu-ray player, a format only now starting to become an essential household requirement in this hi-definition era, and the unique Vita connectivity isn't found on any rival format.

Sony need to get ahead of the game. Microsoft got the jump on them with the 360 and because of that, the PS3 lost out on many exclusives in its early years

Then again, Sony need to get ahead of the game. Microsoft got the jump on them with the 360 and because of that, the PS3 lost out on many exclusives in its early years. This cannot be allowed to happen again. In addition, game series such as *Uncharted* and *Resistance* have had full cycles on the system and are looking to broaden their scope and scale for a next-gen era. Sony are continuing the push the limits of PS3, but their amazing first-party concepts are crying out for an even larger source of power.

We expect concrete details and a possible launch of PS4 in late 2013.





WATCH DOGS

PUBLISHER Ubisoft • **DEVELOPER** Ubisoft Montreal

NEW GENERATION, NEW IP. The Montreal branch of Ubisoft blew our minds when they showed off *Watch Dogs* at E3. Not just because the concept feels fresh and the world different, but because it looks so damn good using current-gen hardware. Aiden Pearce is something of a hacking anti-hero, rebelling against a technologically driven world by using devices to fight back against the system. Aiden's objective sees him trace targets that have abused this power, and embraced its rewards to the detriment of others. To aid him, Aiden can intercept phone conversations to gain more information on his target, or dictate the flow of traffic through manipulating the lights. He can also use the benefits of parkour to evade capture and even enlist a co-op buddy to watch his back.

In a year where Rockstar intends to show other developers how to create the definitive open-world experience with *GTA V*, *Watch Dogs* is attracting a lot of interest with its innovative design and unique mechanics. With so many seasoned designers and visionary minds at the helm, the potential is enormous, and one that just might live up to the hype.



LIGHTNING RETURNS

PUBLISHER Square Enix • **DEVELOPER** In-house

2013 WILL MARK the unprecedented. For the first time in the series' history, a numbered Final Fantasy instalment will actually be rounded out with a trilogy. *Final Fantasy XIII-3* or better known as *Lightning Returns*, will focus on...er...the returning protagonist from *Final Fantasy XIII*. Lightning's latest will be much more personal with consequences in battle felt all over the world, and them also having an impact on time. The game takes place over the course of thirteen days and Lightning's actions will determine whether she gains or loses that time. With more customisation and improved battle tactics, this one is shaping up well.



☛ The final *Final Fantasy* in this saga?



MODERN WARFARE 4

PUBLISHER Activision • **DEVELOPER** TBA

THIS IS THE safest bet we'll make in this whole feature. With rumours all over the spectrum, such as a setting in Somalia, a brand new central protagonist, and new dialogue from the voice actors of Captain Price and Soap MacTavish, *MW4* seems real and moving along just nicely. It all stands to make sense. Yet it may not be Infinity Ward on *COD* duty in 2013, as Sledgehammer are deep in the recruitment phase. What's more, they're supposedly developing for current platforms. Doesn't that just go against our projections for a PS4 in 2013 then, eh?



ASSASSIN'S CREED 13

PUBLISHER Ubisoft • **DEVELOPER** In-house

WITH OVER 3.5 MILLION copies sold, Connor has proven to be just as, if not more popular than Ezio Auditore. *AC13* has been a rousing success for Ubisoft, so it shouldn't be much of a surprise to anyone that we expect to see a return to the Old America setting at the tail-end of 2013. With speculation about a Fassbender-driven feature film also set to hit next year, we could be looking at the biggest year for the franchise yet. However, if Connor is coming back, expect this to be his last outing. Ubi aren't keen on any more character trilogies.



STAR WARS 1313

PUBLISHER LucasArts • **DEVELOPER** In-house

DISNEY DEAL ASIDE, *1313* is moving full-steam ahead for launch in 2013. However, with the graphical horsepower it's churning out, rumours suggest it may not appear on PS3. As a bounty hunter, you must explore the depths and depravity of Coruscant's subterranean level, *1313*, a dark place with corruption on every corner. *1313* is a cover-based action/adventure that forgoes lightsabers and Jedi powers for blasters and gadgets. From what little we've seen of the game, it looks magnificent and has us excited for *Star Wars* games all over again.

M.I.A.

What happened to these games?



THE LAST GUARDIAN

Yoshida remains insistent that Team ICO's next will be a PS3 title despite the engineering team having to re-work some of the code. Perhaps naively, we still expect this in 2013.



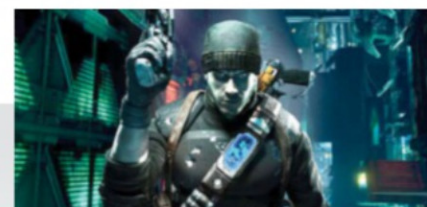
FINAL FANTASY VERSUS XIII

Seven years later and we're still waiting. Set to change the way we think about *Final Fantasy* forever by fully embracing real-time, this one must be nearly finished, surely?



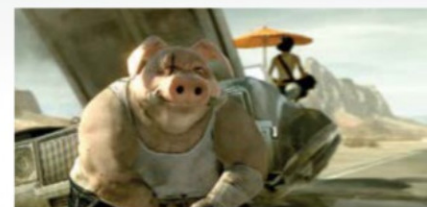
RAINBOW 6 PATRIOTS

With key development talent removed from the game, rumours have been building that this will pop up on next-gen systems. We're still holding out hope for the next twelve months.



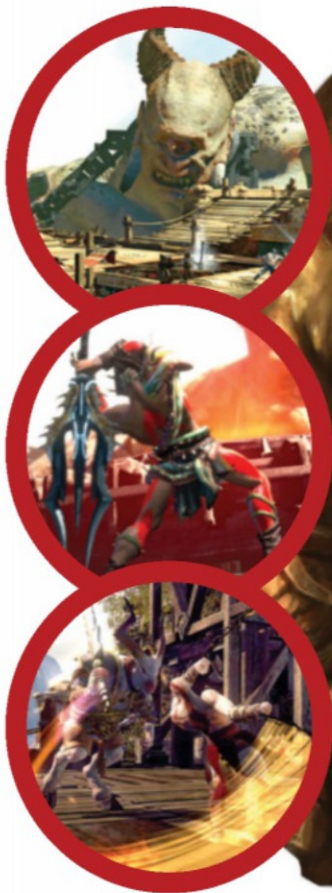
PREY 2

Bethesda have suddenly gone cryptic and dark on this one. A radically different approach to the original *Prey*, we hope to hear more on this open-world epic in 2013.



BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 2

With Peij and Jade recently remastered in HD, we hoped their second adventure wouldn't be far behind. Thanks to *Rayman*, we're still waiting. Will 2013 be the year of the reporter?



GOD OF WAR: ASCENSION

PUBLISHER Sony Computer Entertainment • **DEVELOPER** SCE Santa Monica Studio

IN THIS PREQUEL, Kratos is still the innocent demigod who has just been tricked by Ares into killing his wife and child. To seek vengeance, he must escape the prison to which he has been sentenced for breaking his blood oath to the god.

You'll have the chance to pledge your allegiance to Ares too, with the all-new multiplayer mode. Whether you side with the god of war or Zeus, Poseidon, or Hades, you'll get to use different abilities to fight the opposing team for control of the map.

In single-player, new features include the ability to steal weapons from your enemies or just use the enemies themselves, swinging them around like you're trying to recapture the yo-yo fad of the Nineties, if yo-yos were tools of murder. With the time-shifting "Life Cycle" mechanic, it looks like Sony is adding just enough to keep things fresh while sticking to the brutal combat we love.



Ⓢ A quite extraordinary-looking PS3 exclusive for 2013, then.

THE LAST OF US

PUBLISHER Sony • **DEVELOPER** Naughty Dog

THERE'S NO DOUBT that *The Last Of Us* is the guaranteed massive hitter of 2013 for the PS3, with the sort of buzz that is making Xbox owners green with envy. With a focus on storytelling and Naughty Dog at the helm, this post-apocalyptic survival tale is still very much an unknown quantity. With a shortage of bullets and a reliance on physical attacks, it's an intriguing proposition that goes against the lighter curve of everything Naughty Dog has tackled to date, even if we can't help but see some shared DNA with the *Uncharted* series in the moment-to-moment mechanics. Hopefully we'll get hands-on with it in the near-future, and we'll be able to determine just how unscripted the game's many combat scenarios are. Not that we mind either way, really; the big Dog has never let us down, and becoming a two-game studio can only be good news for the future of exclusives on PlayStation platforms. Let's hope we don't have to wait too long for this one.





COMING EARLY 2013

METRO: LAST LIGHT

Publisher: THQ

Developer: 4A Games

Expected release date: March 2013
WITH THE RARITY of ammunition and clean air giving *Last Light* the same survival horror feel as *Metro 2033*, this is one underground we don't mind spending more time in.



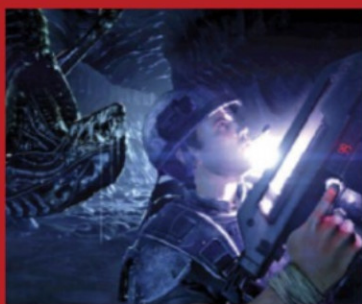
ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES

Publisher: Sega

Developer: Gearbox Software

Expected release date: February 2013

ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES, which is said to be a true sequel to *Alien 3*, features drop-in/drop-out local or online co-op for the campaign, and ridiculously fun competitive multiplayer.



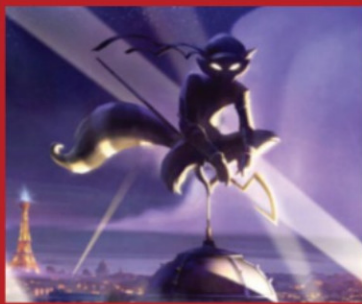
SLY COOPER: THIEVES IN TIME

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment

Developer: Sanzaru Games

Expected release date: February 2013

IT'S BEEN A while since we've had a new *Sly Cooper*, and with stealth, costumes, and time travel, *Thieves In Time* looks like it'll be worth the wait.



FFXIV: A REALM REBORN

Publisher: Square Enix

Developer: In-house

Expected release date: TBC 2013

WITH ITS RELAUNCH, *Final Fantasy XIV* is finally coming to PS3. It looks beautiful and, luckily for us, should be much improved when we do get our hands on it.



DEAD ISLAND: RIPTIDE

Publisher: Deep Silver

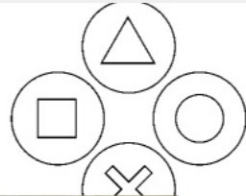
Developer: Techland

Expected release date: April 2013

OUR PROTAGONISTS WILL have to go through the same hell they did in *Dead Island*, their dreams of safety shattered, but that game was pretty good so we can't complain.



2013 IN PERSPECTIVE



DEADPOOL

PUBLISHER Activision • DEVELOPER High Moon Studios

DEADPOOL'S MANIC BRAND of insanity looks to be a pretty good fit for videogames. With a combination of typical combo-heavy action and humour that includes breaking the fourth wall, this looks like it could be perfect for when you just want to kick back and relax.



It's not the most visually complex show, but the graphics are great.

SOUTH PARK: THE STICK OF TRUTH

DEVELOPER Obsidian Entertainment • PUBLISHER THQ

THE WHOLE POINT of this game is that it looks and feels like an episode of *South Park*, so expect plenty of Trey Parker and Matt Stone's outrageous humour. The plot, for instance, is typically ridiculous, revolving around a city-wide live-action role-playing game being played by the children of South Park that ends up going too far.

You'll get to use lots of magical weapons and the help of classic *South Park* characters to fight against such threats as crabpeople, underpants gnomes, and hippies. Plus, you'll be playing as a highly customisable "new kid" trying to become cool enough to be the latest member of the South Park gang, so if you've always wanted to live in South Park (why!?) then this is your chance.

2013 IN PLAYSTATION



TEARAWAY

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer: Media Molecule
Expected release date: TBC 2013
 Can Media Molecule create another success? With *Tearaway*, a paper-themed game that asks you to push your fingers "through" the screen, it certainly looks like it.



BIOSHOCK

Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Irrational Games
Expected release date: TBC 2013
 We don't even know what *BioShock* for Vita will be called, but Ken Levine has said it's not a port of *Infinite*, so look forward to something new and exciting.



PERSONA 4: GOLDEN

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Atlus
Expected release date: February 2013
Persona 4: Golden has been boosting Vita sales in Japan since June, but it's finally coming to us in February, bringing new features, story, and a new character.



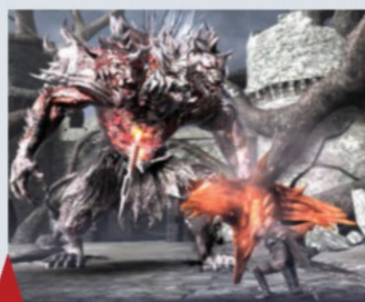
FINAL FANTASY X HD

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: In-house
Expected release date: TBC 2013
 If there was ever a game that deserved to be remastered in HD for Vita, it's *Final Fantasy X*. Watch this space for news on the game closer to launch.



SOUL SACRIFICE

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer: Marvelous AQL/SCEJ
Expected release date: TBC 2013
 The Vita gets a parallel title to *Monster Hunter* in *Soul Sacrifice*, a title that Sony is no doubt hoping will help sell the PS Vita in Japan.



BEYOND: TWO SOULS

PUBLISHER Sony Computer Entertainment • **DEVELOPER** Quantic Dream

ADDING TO ALL the evidence that the PS3 is where all the really interesting games are at, next year Quantic Dream is bringing us a story about death and what happens afterwards. For those who loved *Heavy Rain*, *Beyond: Two Souls* looks like it'll have more of the same intense, choice-driven narrative. For those who didn't, well, this one has Ellen Page.

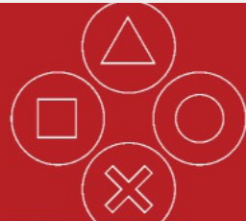
With its stunning environments and motion-captured character animation, and a story that will take us through several years of the life of protagonist Jodie Holmes, you have to admire the scope of *Beyond*. It'll probably feature a lot of quicktime events, but it'll also let you play as a ghost who can fly through physical objects and possess people, so you have to pick your battles. Besides, we love a good psychological thriller, and this one looks like the kind that stays with you long after the end.



DRAGON AGE III: INQUISITION

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • **DEVELOPER** BioWare

INQUISITION ISN'T DUE until late 2013, but what we've already heard sounds promising. Aaryn Flynn, a manager at BioWare, wants "a great story with choices that matter, a massive world to explore, deep customisation and combat that is both tactical and visceral." Could it be the PS4's first big RPG?



☒ You'll also get to see scenes of the city before it goes to hell.



☒ The first one was terrific, and a sequel can only do good for the series.

CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW 2

PUBLISHER Konami • DEVELOPER MercurySteam

GABRIEL (A.K.A. DRACULA) returns in *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2*, weak and needing to retrieve his supernatural powers before he gets wiped out. We haven't seen any gameplay footage yet, but if it's anything like the first then expect to be running around whipping (get it?) your foes into shape.

BIOSHOCK INFINITE

PUBLISHER 2K Games • DEVELOPER Irrational Games

WELL, THIS IS embarrassing; *BioShock Infinite* actually appeared in *Play* this time last year as we looked forward to 2012, but has ended up being pushed back to February next year. So there must be something special about this one if we're still excited despite the hold-up, right? Right. With *BioShock Infinite*, we're back with the developers of the original *BioShock*, and from what we've seen it looks like we're in for another unique experience.

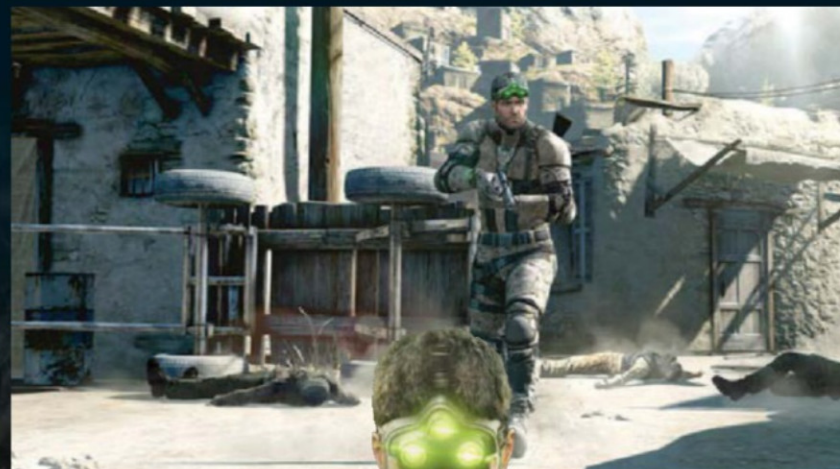
Far from just switching things up a little by telling the same story from a different perspective, a la *BioShock 2*, *Infinite* has a brand new plot in a brand new setting. And what a setting. We can't wait to explore the floating world of 1912 Columbia, zipping along Sky-Lines and discovering whatever secrets this city in the clouds might have to hide.

And this huge environment is far from empty. With socio-political issues keeping tensions high, there'll be plenty of people trying to kill you. If that's not enough to keep your guns happy, *Infinite* also pits you against a variety of bizarre and extra-tough "heavy hitters", from the ghostly siren who can raise your enemies from the dead to the creepy boys of silence that seek you out by sound alone.

As well as guns galore, protagonist Booker DeWitt also has a few special skills, like the use of telekinesis to hold enemies still for easier targets. Elizabeth, the damsel whose distress has brought Booker to Columbia in the first place, has her own set of powers too, so you'll be able to call on her to tear a hole in space and time when the situation demands it. Her child-like innocence and tendency to get herself into trouble might be annoying, but Booker will undoubtedly be glad to have her by his side.



☒ Ride the skyrails and cause havoc in the floating city.



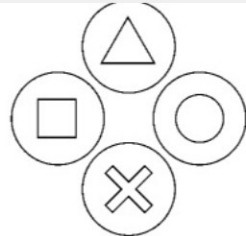
SPLINTER CELL: BLACKLIST

PUBLISHER Ubisoft • DEVELOPER Ubisoft Toronto

DESPITE HOW THINGS looked at E3, *Blacklist* will feature plenty of the stealth we're used to from the previous *Splinter Cell* games. You'll get to shoot a lot of guys, sure, but you'll also get to hide behind walls. Basically, you get to choose, which is always a good thing.



Devil May Cry™



2013
PLAYSTATION

REINVENTING DEVIL MAY CRY

DANTE'S CONTENTIOUS REBOOT IS ACTUALLY SHAPING UP TO BE AN EARLY HIGHLIGHT OF 2013 – WE VISITED DEVELOPER NINJA THEORY TO SEE HOW IT TACKLED FAN CRITICISM AND CONFIDENTLY REBUILT DANTE

"Hey Tameem I made some cover art for your *DmC* piece of shit." Accompanying the tweet aimed at Tameem Antoniades, co-founder of *DmC* developer Ninja Theory, was a mocked-up image showing a naked fat guy with bleached hair in a bath tub, convenient soap subs blocking out his dangly bits. 'VERGIL' is stamped in one corner, 'CRAPCOM' defiantly stamped in another. "Awesome hate commitment," added Tameem when he retweeted the image for all his followers. Such is the life of the man in charge of a project no-one asked for, no-one wants and everyone hates.

PUBLIC IMAGE LTD

Or so the public image goes. When Capcom revealed the first details of *DmC*, something of a series reboot that examines Dante's origins, the internet erupted. Keyboards clattered with fury, slamming Ninja Theory's involvement, Capcom's outsourcing and yes, the colour of Dante's hair. Capcom has stood its ground in the face of the internet's anger and today,

in the calmer environment of Ninja Theory's studio, it talks about the reasons for outsourcing the project.

"We wanted to avoid the problem that befalls some series where you keep making it with the same team and same hardware," explained Hideaki Itsuno, supervising director on *DmC*. "It tends to decrease and fans move away from it. We wanted to avoid that. We don't want the series to die. So what we decided to do was to add new elements and look for a new developer, specifically a Western developer that could bring something new to the series, keep it fresh and maybe attract new fans as well."

Capcom approached Ninja Theory after seeing *Heavenly Sword* in action, as it showcased exactly the sort of skills in terms of action and story-telling that Capcom wanted for *DmC*. The two began working together before *Enslaved: Journey To The West* hit the shelves and the reception for that reinforced Capcom's belief that it had picked the right studio. But the publisher maintains this reboot hasn't come about as a response to any negative feedback regarding *Devil May Cry 4* – "It was the highest-selling game of the series," notes Itsuno – but because they wanted to do something different with the series.

And that's part of the reason that Capcom wasn't fazed when the

internet unsheathed its claws in response to new Dante, as Itsuno explains. "There's no point in going in this new direction unless there's change, right? We knew there was no point unless there was going to be change. There was no point in working with a new foreign developer, especially one as unique as Ninja Theory, unless there's change. So we were ready for there to be some response to it. That was the whole idea of working with a new developer with a new style. Maybe there were some other people at Capcom who were a little more surprised but personally I was ready for it."

During his answer, Itsuno gestures at the Capcom PR in the room, who snaps out of his Blackberry-tapping trance when the supervising director points at him. Why did you point at >

Devil May Cry-

> the Capcom PR? Itsuno starts laughing. "The developers were like, 'Yeah, we're prepared for that.' Everyone else at the company was like 'Argh, I can't believe it!'"

RE-INVENTING THE STORY

In going back to Dante's roots, we're seeing how Dante has grown into the cocky, arrogant demon-killer we've become familiar with throughout the series. Ninja Theory went right back to the beginning with the iconic character, including an early mission where Dante revisits his place of birth and reflects on what he can remember of his early childhood.

"We went back to Dante's childhood and we started to make a story about him," said Tameem. "We had big discussions about where did he grow up? What's his favourite drink? Where did he grow up? What happened to him when he was four or five? What would he be like as a runaway, escaping this threat, this violence around him and being at the lowest rung of society? What makes him a bit of a brash arsehole? There's got to be a reason why he's cocky. So we created this whole history of him, including the first time he's in a fight and he gets stabbed in the heart, so he discovers he can't die. He's not human. How would he respond to the

NINJA THEORY'S ART TEAM ON THE DANTE REACTION

STUART ADCOCK, TECHNICAL ART DIRECTOR, TALKS ABOUT THE REACTION TO DANTE'S HAIR

We didn't expect that reaction. We've done things naturally. We don't think "Oh, shall we do that so they're really upset?" We just do our normal thing. Maybe because we didn't expect that, we were really relaxed to do that like any other videogame, to give a reason why he's got black hair, to think about the past of the character.

When we saw [the reaction], it was much more than we expected. Maybe Capcom expected that because they know the *Devil May Cry* fans more than us. But I didn't expect that. Some people say "Oh, it kind of looks cool but why not just give it a different name?" But it is a *Devil May Cry* experience, you know? That's always what we're going for. So when some of the fans go "It looks alright but why call it *Devil May Cry* because it's clearly not," well if you play it, it's a *Devil May Cry* experience. We definitely weren't counting on a reaction like that. We were, to some extent, taken back and went "Woah, shit, there's a lot of people not liking this." But it never derailed us. We had the story of a journey to tell with the character.

If people could see the amount that had gone into it throughout the project – working with the actors, working with the story, getting every bit of his personality and his expressions across – they would understand that talking about the hair is such a black and white decision. Literally! Especially when you consider that we do want to give the players these high-end experiences. One of them, of course, is when you start a character not how people know him to be, you have the opportunity to show an exaggerated version of that character in limbo and if you start off like that in the beginning, where would you have gone with it? Would it have gone too far-fetched? It wouldn't have fitted in the human world. We just needed a chance to tell that story.

powers within him, as an adolescent?"

Those questions are mostly answered via in-game cutscenes told with dark, affecting artwork. We see Dante stabbed during a bar-room fight but not dying, before he abuses his power to hunt demons and seduce women. We see what happens with Dante's parents and his brother Vergil, and how the family was torn apart. Most of all, we see Dante's first steps towards the character he is now.

The story eventually reaches wider than Dante's past and focuses on something modern and topical. Kyle Ryder wants to control the world through debt and his mind-numbing soft drink Virility, which has become popular through an aggressive advertising campaign built on lies and false promises.

Dante's fight sees him straddling both the real-world and 'limbo', an alternate universe where anything goes, demons crawl out of the walls to attack him and the environment now twists itself into blockades to



stop Dante getting any further. Dante joins The Order, whose mask-wearing calls to mind Anonymous. Dante's movements are reported on by deranged newsreader Bob Barbus, who is Bill O'Reilly in game form. We find out later that Kyle Ryder is the human form for the demon Mundus – the antagonist of the original *Devil May Cry* – but going up against a corporate leader rather than a demonic creature with six horns and three arseholes feels relevant and fresh.

"I think maybe the direction of the story is very different," said Itsuno. "With previous *DmC* stories, [you can] compare it more to French film where there's a lot of indirect things. Not everything is said. It's obviously very similar to Japanese culture. Obviously with this new *DmC* we're going for Hollywood. Straight, direct, in-your-face style. That goes for the storytelling as well."





LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE

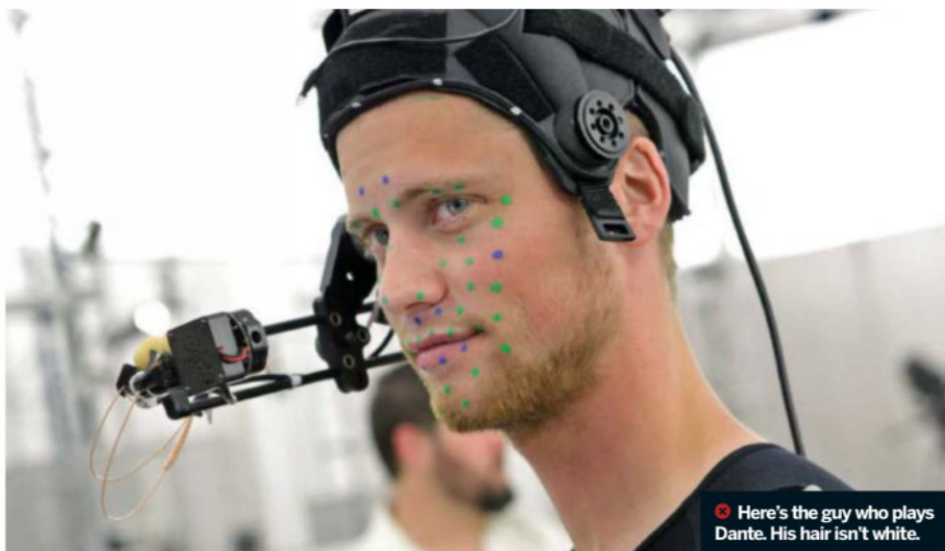
Hair isn't important. Neither is plot, if we're being brutally honest. Combat is. This is what set *Devil May Cry* apart from its peers, not Dante's silver mane. The games were notoriously difficult, forcing Dante to use his wide array of moves to carve through the enemies and bosses standing in his way. It wasn't just about killing but killing with style, chaining together moves from his different weapons to nudge the ever-present style rank up.

In *DmC*, Dante has three forms – human form (with Rebellion sword), angel form (with Osiris scythe) and demon form (with Soul Calibur-esque Arbiter axe). As you progress through *DmC*, you unlock new weapons for each form – we got as far as seeing Eryx gauntlets for the demon form – as you begin to find your own style through the individual movesets for each weapon. Dante also has new push and pull moves, where he can either whip himself towards an enemy or pull them into close-quarters.

Moves can be linked together in traditional *Devil May Cry* style. Slash an enemy, launch, leap after it, slash it in the air, slam it back down to earth, spin above it firing pistols, slash it some more while on the ground, hit it away, pull it back towards you... this sentence could effectively last until the end of this feature or until the creature disappears in a cloud of red orbs. If you've got the skills, you can combo enemies, just as with previous *Devil May Cry* games. It's important to note the lethargic response times and lengthy animations of combat in *Heavenly Sword* and *Enslaved* have been ditched. This is fast. Responsive. Instant.

Enemies force you to change things up too. Frost Knights can only be hurt by Angel attacks while Hell Knights are only vulnerable to demon form. Other enemies carry shields, which need to be pulled away or crushed with demon form attacks. Twisted angel-like creatures hover just out of reach, throwing grenades. Chainsaw-wielding creatures turn invulnerable just before they attack. There's a lot to consider when carving your way through *DmC* and part of the skill in putting together combos, as with previous games, is your ability to adapt and improvise for each situation.

While *DmC* rattles through the essential combat mechanics early on – here's how to dodge, here's how to switch weapon – Devil Trigger is notable by its absence. In fact, it doesn't show up until mission 9, as part of the story. Devil Trigger now throws all the enemies into the air in slow motion, giving Dante a few precious seconds to attack them without interruption. The first time ➤

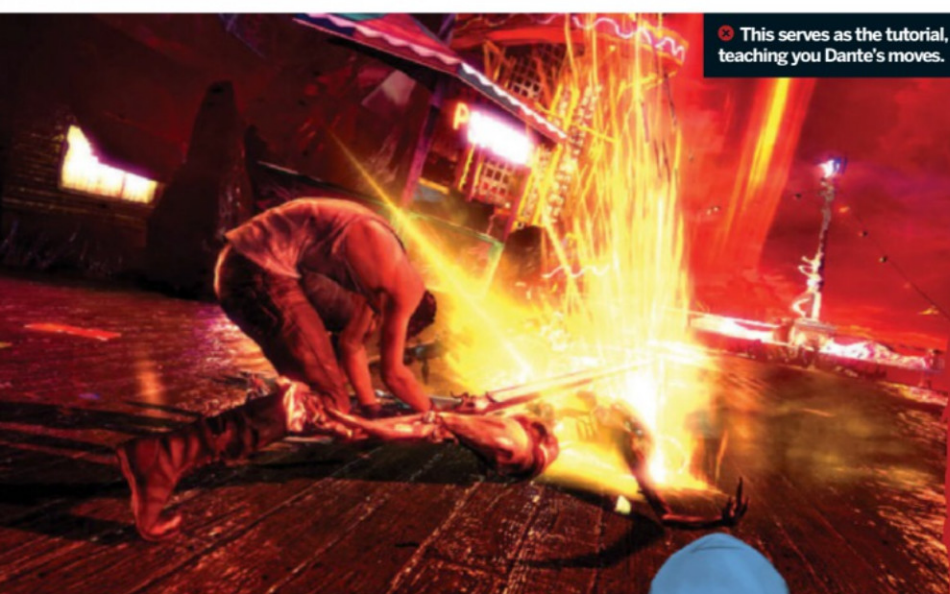


Here's the guy who plays Dante. His hair isn't white.

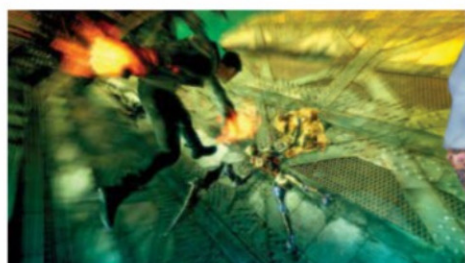
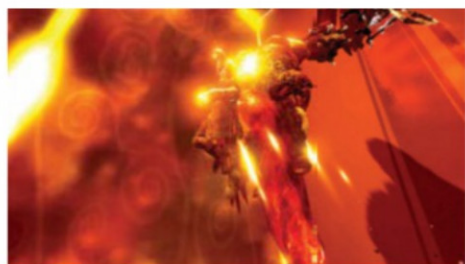
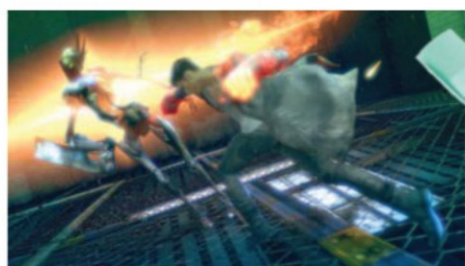




Platforming sections are more fun than you may think.



This serves as the tutorial, teaching you Dante's moves.



WHAT MAKES DMC SPECIAL?

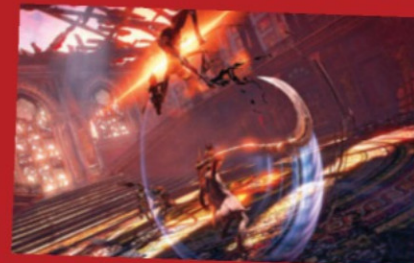
THE ARBITER

Holding R2 accesses your Demon Form attacks, which is initially the Arbiter axe but can later be switched for Eryx gauntlets. As these attacks are slower, more thought and care is needed to successfully weave them into combos.



THE OSIRIS

Hold L2 accesses Angel Form attacks, initially the Osiris scythe. While they lack in power these attacks are quick and also have a unique 'spinning' launcher. Angel Form is often a good way to open combos, as you can beat enemies to the punch.



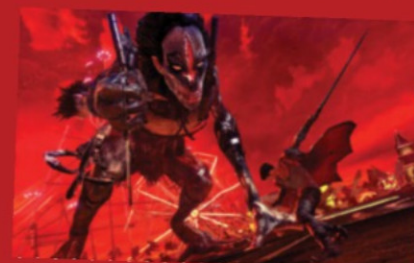
LOST IN LIMBO

The alternate world Dante finds himself in is limbo, a distorted version of 'reality' where everything is hostile. Messages such as 'FUCK YOU DANTE' are scorched onto the walls and the world literally twists itself into new obstacles.



THE HUNTER

This is the first boss battle. The Hunter has attacks that are easily telegraphed and it serves more as a test of your skills to that point rather than demanding *DmC* mastery but the scale and design of the creature is still impressive.



FEELING MOVED

Dante's moveset includes all his trademarks from later games – Stinger, Drive, Million Stab, Charged Shot, Rainstorm and so on. He also has some new moves, such as Inverse Rainstorm, where he spirals upwards while firing Ebony & Ivory.



NO DUBSTEP

One of *Devil May Cry*'s trademarks is the use of a hard-hitting metal track to riff off during combat sequences, cutscenes, anything. That's been well replicated by Ninja Theory, who have used Combichrist and Noisia to cook up similar riffs. Most importantly, as far as we're concerned, the obnoxious dubstep route has been avoided. "There is dubstep there but I hope it's not obnoxious!" says Tom Colvin, Audio Lead. "Noisia is much more of a bass-noises kind of act rather than a pure dubstep sound. It does seem like a slightly 'Hey we're jumping on a bandwagon!' decision to have dubstep but you've got to remember three years ago, when we were making decisions about this, dubstep wasn't the huge thing it is today, and Noisia's reputation has grown as dubstep has grown so we're fortunate we're in that position."

> he uses Devil Trigger, some of his hair turns white. Do you see where Ninja Theory is going with this?

BOSS BATTLES

The two standout moments come from what we've played and they're both boss battles. The first is a boss battle against the creature that secretes the goo that is Virility's secret ingredient. It's a giant, disgusting worm that dwarves Dante and screeches at you about how it's been alive for 1,000 years. Your battle against it sees you having to slash away at its hands and leaping to other platforms when the creature vomits acidic goo at you. Yet the brilliance isn't just the scale but how the battle develops. It's unpredictable and exciting, plus Dante has a few wicked one-liners which we won't spoil. In terms of character, it's perfect.

But it's the boss battle against Bob Barbas that's looking like *DmC*'s standout moment. To reach Barbas, you have to navigate floating platforms in a sterile environment while news jingles play in the background. Upon reaching the final arena, Bob's head appears as he spits white noise and static at you. The battleground seems to be built on flimsy audio-visual technology, crackling as the battle grows with intensity, sometimes cutting out altogether as image of Bob Barbas dominates the dim arena. While it's a fairly straightforward encounter in terms of raw gameplay – study attack patterns, strike when there's an obvious gap – it's an absolute feast for the eyes that matches and arguably surpasses the imagination on show with previous *Devil May Cry* titles.

✖ We had a nightmare like this once. Don't eat cheese before bed.

TOO EASY?

One concern we have is that *DmC* will be too easy. On default difficulty, Devil Hunter, it was too easy to rattle through the style rankings and work through the game. There are further difficulty settings – Nephilim, Son Of Sparda, Dante Must Die, Heaven Or Hell, Hell And Hell – but the gentle difficulty does soften the intensity of each battle and the need to explore Dante's arsenal with the same fervour as *Devil May Cry 3*. Part of it is also to do with Ninja Theory's level design. While the levels retain their abstract, bizarre feel that fits in with the series, they're also quite linear and straightforward. There's little to no backtracking ever needed. While some argue that's a good thing, there are no labyrinths like *Devil May Cry 3*'s castle spirals, no real exploration to be done or puzzles to break up the pacing.

"As far as difficulty is concerned, if you're really looking into just getting the game and beating the game, we think that we've made it a little easier to get into," Itsuno



told us. "Especially with auto lock-on rather than manual lock-on. Or for example, with the combo finishers, you don't have to do multi-button presses now. We think things like that will make it easier for people to start playing *DmC* but for hardcore fans and for people really looking for punishing difficulty and action, we think that the overall depth is actually deeper than previous *DmCs*. So it's easier to pick up but to master will definitely take some time and effort. That's the kind of thing we want the fans to understand and appreciate."

But the concern that *DmC* is too easy on default difficulty is a more comforting concern than Ninja Theory being the wrong developer for the job, or the combat will be awful, or Dante's hair is the wrong colour. To go from a project no-one wanted to a game that everyone should enjoy, from fat Vergil with Capcom logos to fans admitting you know what, this actually isn't that bad. That's the goal and so far, *DmC* is confidently striding towards it. ✖

2013
IN
PLAYSTATION

WHY CRYISIS 3 IS THE ULTIMATE SEQUEL

CRYTEK GIVES NEW YORK A TOTALLY TROPICAL TASTE, TRANSFORMING THE WORLD'S GREATEST CITY INTO A WAR-RIDDEN FUTURISTIC DOME, FUSING TOGETHER THE IDEAS BEHIND THE ORIGINAL CRYISIS AND CRYISIS 2. PRODUCER MIKE READ EXPLAINS WHY THIS TRILOGY CLOSER IS THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

It seems a little unfair that the *Crysis* series is probably better known for its developer's insistence on pushing technology to its very limits, rather than being acclaimed for its merits as a first-person shooter franchise par excellence. The PC original was regarded as the game that only a select few with top-of-the-range hardware could play, rather than being a tremendous and uncommonly open shooter in its own right. *Crysis*' graphics might have been its most marketable asset, but some wrongly dismissed it as a case of style over substance.

Meanwhile, for the follow-up, the German publisher dialled back its ambitions a touch, releasing the more linear *Crysis 2* on consoles as well as PC, a decision that didn't sit too well with the desktop hardcore. Even so, it was still a rock-solid FPS with looks that, while not quite as astonishing as its forerunner, could slacken a PS3 owner's jaw at ten paces. The lush, verdant jungles of the original were traded for the decaying urban grid of a ruined New York City, a better fit for a narrower, more focused shooter.

The story continues next February with a game that may not be the end of the line for the *Crysis* universe, but seems likely to tie up the final strands of this particular narrative – and Crytek

has come up with the perfect excuse to combine the best of both predecessors. The Big Apple now lies under a giant Nanodome, built by the nefarious CELL Corporation ostensibly to protect citizens from alien invaders, but really to harvest a secret energy source. The result: many streets are now rivers, forests have sprung up around skyscrapers, and elsewhere there are boggy marshlands to negotiate.

In other words, a lot has happened in 24 years since we last saw protagonist Prophet and the rest of the Delta Force marines. Producer Mike Read was only too happy to fill in the gaps for us. "Over that period of 20+ years basically what [the CELL Corporation] have done is to harness the world's energy resources to get really cheap power, sell it to the public and manage to create a monopoly over this specifically."

And what of our Nanosuit-ed friends from past games? "We've also introduced Psycho into the scenario and of course Prophet's in there – [he] had been doing a number of operations over the course of the 20 years alongside Psycho. Prophet was eventually captured and that brings us to where we are at the start of *Crysis 3*, where Psycho has basically broken Prophet out of incarceration after a number of years." And hell bent on revenge, we shouldn't wonder.

WHY CRYISIS 3 IS THE ULTIMATE SEQUEL





> From what we've seen so far, Crytek has expertly combined elements of the earlier titles, the natural beauty of the tropics juxtaposed with familiar New York landmarks in a way that feels remarkably unforced. It makes *Crysis 3* feel less guided than its immediate predecessor, without overwhelming those who don't like getting lost. It's Crytek having its cake and eating it, in other words, and it's a pretty tasty cake at that.

Still, Read doesn't believe it was a deliberate decision to combine the two – at least, not initially. "Between our designers and the different things they wanted to do I don't necessarily think this was an intent going into creating *Crysis 3*, but they started looking into it, looking at different elements and it kind of evolved into [this]. My understanding of where it came from is that we had New York City, we wanted to come back to [it] but we also wanted to do something different and using the dome itself allowed us to create a fiction around how New York has been destroyed, how the buildings have been broken down and how various areas of this jungle environment have grown due to the greenhouse effect because of this dome. So I think that's where that main piece [of fiction] came from."

The idea of pooling the strengths of the first two games is an enticing proposition, even given that the two were as different as an FPS and its sequel are likely to get, the more open elements of the first game being scaled back in the second. Yet Read doesn't believe that the differences between the first two games were quite so pronounced. "*Crysis* had a very open visual style which people perceived as an open world game and people still talk about it like that when in actual fact it really wasn't. Sure, there were a lot of ways you could go and a lot of things you could do, but we still kept people on a path. I think when we brought that into *Crysis 2*, these tall buildings created a bit of a closed-off façade that the game was a lot more linear, a lot more contained. So in dialling things back a little and bringing in the jungle elements and the urban elements I think we've hit a pretty good middle ground with that. And especially those who get their hands on it for the first time, they've been coming back to us completely unsolicited and saying 'Wow you guys really did hit a good middle ground between the two games.' ">

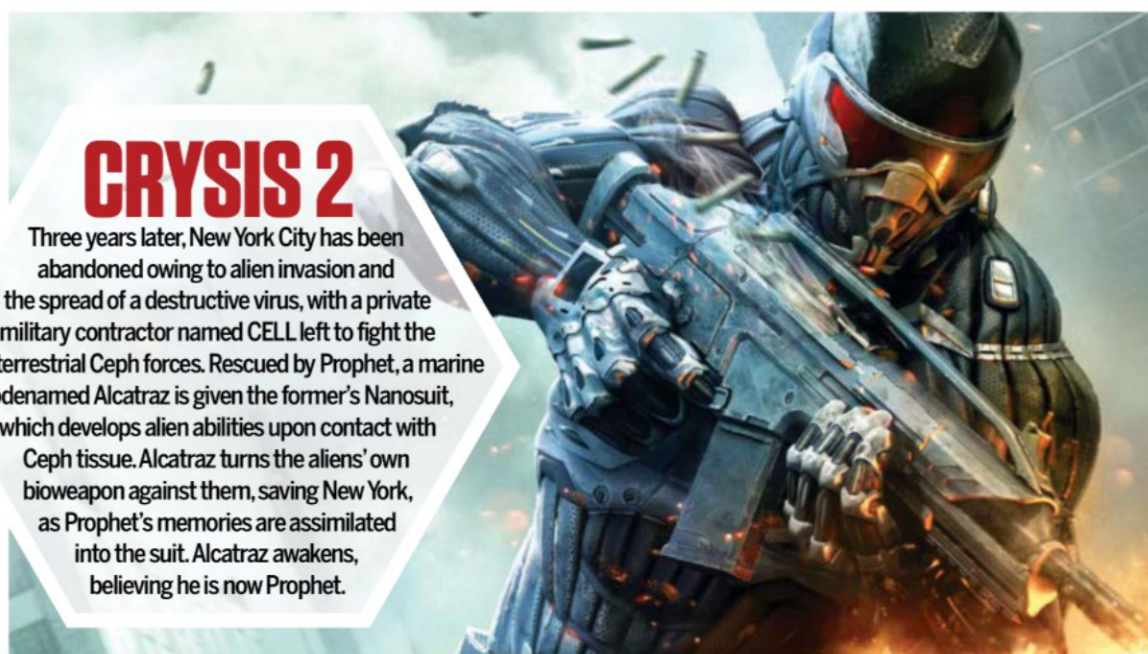
NANOSUITS YOU, SIR

THE STORY SO FAR...



CRYSIS

An ancient alien artifact is discovered in the fictional Lingshan Islands. A group of Delta Force marines, including leader Prophet and protagonist Nomad, is sent to retrieve it and the archaeologists who found it, while fighting off North Korean armed forces. Under attack from otherworldly forces, Nomad finds an alien structure that freezes the island in a giant energy sphere, before discovering a way to defeat them via a signal sent through his Nanosuit.



CRYSIS 2

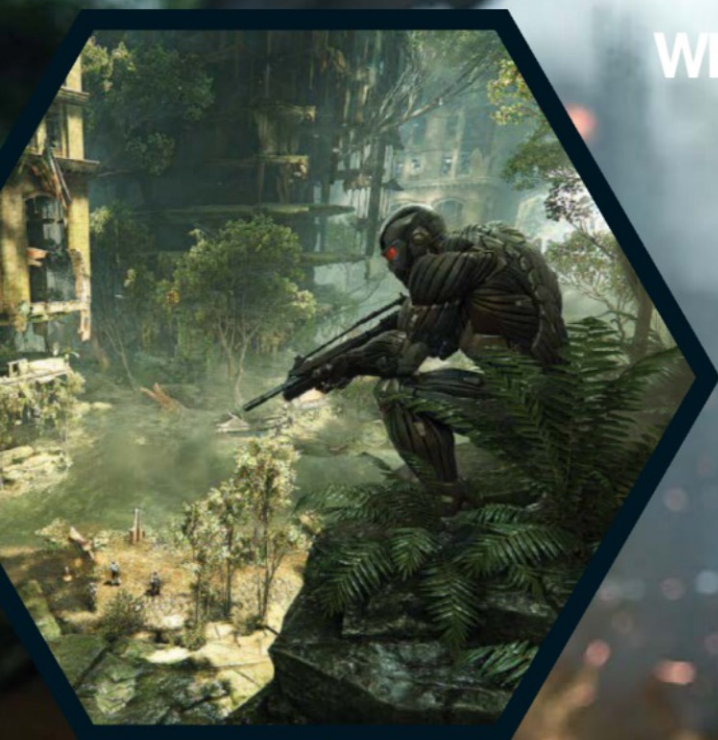
Three years later, New York City has been abandoned owing to alien invasion and the spread of a destructive virus, with a private military contractor named CELL left to fight the extraterrestrial Ceph forces. Rescued by Prophet, a marine codenamed Alcatraz is given the former's Nanosuit, which develops alien abilities upon contact with Ceph tissue. Alcatraz turns the aliens' own bioweapon against them, saving New York, as Prophet's memories are assimilated into the suit. Alcatraz awakens, believing he is now Prophet.



CRYSIS 3

24 years on, Prophet returns to New York City, now encased in a Nanodome built by CELL. Having uncovered the true reason behind the PMC's motives for erecting the dome – an attempt to harvest resources for huge profits – the marine, now possessing greater alien powers, arrives in NYC on a mission of revenge.

WHY CRYISIS 3 IS THE ULTIMATE SEQUEL



➤ Hopefully *Crysis 3*'s story will be an improvement on its predecessor.

➤ It's like *The Hunger Games* with powersuits.



➤ Urban decay should make for interesting environments.

➤ Indeed, it's evident from our conversation with Read that user feedback is very important to the publisher. He discusses the desire from players to "throw in a lot more suit powers", as well as the game's increased difficulty for top-tier players ("Wow, you guys really did make this hard"). It turns out three games in it's not too difficult for Crytek's designers to come up with ways to make a hardened soldier in a super-powerful Nanosuit still feel vulnerable. "I don't think it's really been an issue," he shrugs. "I think at this point it's become a lot more refined, even though we've changed the AI systems over the course of the three games."

Of course, that isn't to say that there aren't more ways to deal with enemy threats. It turns out Prophet is something of a futuristic Errol Flynn, as handy with a bow as his contemporaries are with a gun. An archer is only as good as the projectiles they fire, though, so fortunately he has a number of different arrow tips that give him a tactical advantage in combat. "We were actually looking at a few more tips to have in there," admits Read, "but I think we've kind of balanced that out with the four tips. The bow itself was brought in to tie into the whole hunter theme, [as a way of] rolling back a little to elements that we had of the jungle theme in *Crysis*."

As a predator in this literal urban jungle, then, it seems you can go as quiet or as loud as you like. "What we've seen in some of the playtests is that people are using the bow in quite a number of ways in various combinations, and not just standing back and using it in a cloak scenario," says Read. "Past that, certain weapons have various ammo types from electric to explosive or thermic ammo, and of course the number of attachments has been increased. We really want to provide people with a whole number of options for the way they're comfortable tackling [a given situation], so that everybody who goes through it is experiencing it in a much different way."

Does that mean *Crysis 3* offers something for everyone, then? The return of secondary objectives for each mission should ensure players are more willing to explore their environment thoroughly, but as an entirely optional aside, they can be safely ignored by those wishing to play the game as a more straightforward, linear shooter. Translation: whether you prefer *Call Of Duty* or *Far Cry*, you're in luck. And that goes double if you're a fan of deeper environmental interaction. "There are things that we've done through the visor itself," explains Read, "and that's mainly in terms of what

we've introduced with the hacking mechanism, being able to hack mines or turrets or special crates to open them up and stuff like that."

There's also the small matter of Prophet's Nanosuit being infected with alien DNA, which allows him to use a variety of otherworldly weapons. It's another nod to the original, but Read believes the idea has been far better integrated into the game's lore on this occasion. "Over the course of those 20+ years the suit has essentially evolved [through the infection] and that allows us to bring in these weapons. There was actually alien weapon in *Crysis* that people could use – it was kind of a freeze ray, but that didn't really have any story elements specifically tied to it. But in this one, yes, there's going to be five different alien weapons, and yes, there are some balancing mechanisms that'll play into that because they're pretty powerful and a lot of fun to use."

Those with a penchant for destruction, meanwhile, are catered to far better than in *Crysis 2*. Trees can be mown down, you'll regularly see logs and concrete barriers blown apart, while masonry cracks and crumbles under heavy fire. Destruction isn't quite on *Crysis* levels, where players could embark upon a sustained campaign of deforestation by arming ➤

> themselves with a minigun and chewing through rows of trees, but there's a very good reason for that. "It's fun to a point," admits Read, "but it's also very taxing on the software side – and the hardware side as well."

It was bound to come to this. Read talked at E3 about Crytek struggling to squeeze any more juice out of the current consoles, and it's evident it's a bit of a sore point for a software house that prefers to push the technical envelope.

"Throughout the course of development of *Crysis 2* there was a lot of pain experienced in getting our engine to run on the consoles specifically," Read sighs, "which not only hindered us from a technical side but also hindered us from our designers' side as well. That became a big blocker for a lot of the things

we really wanted to do with 2. In this one, we can push it so far, but we're definitely feeling the constraints. This is the longest generation of console that the world has really ever seen and I think in some ways the SDKs [Software Development Kits] improved and in other ways they didn't, but we're trying to squeeze as much as we can to give console users the best graphical experience possible. But we have so much more in terms of seven years of hardware that has advanced over that time to be able to take the PC side and push that even further."

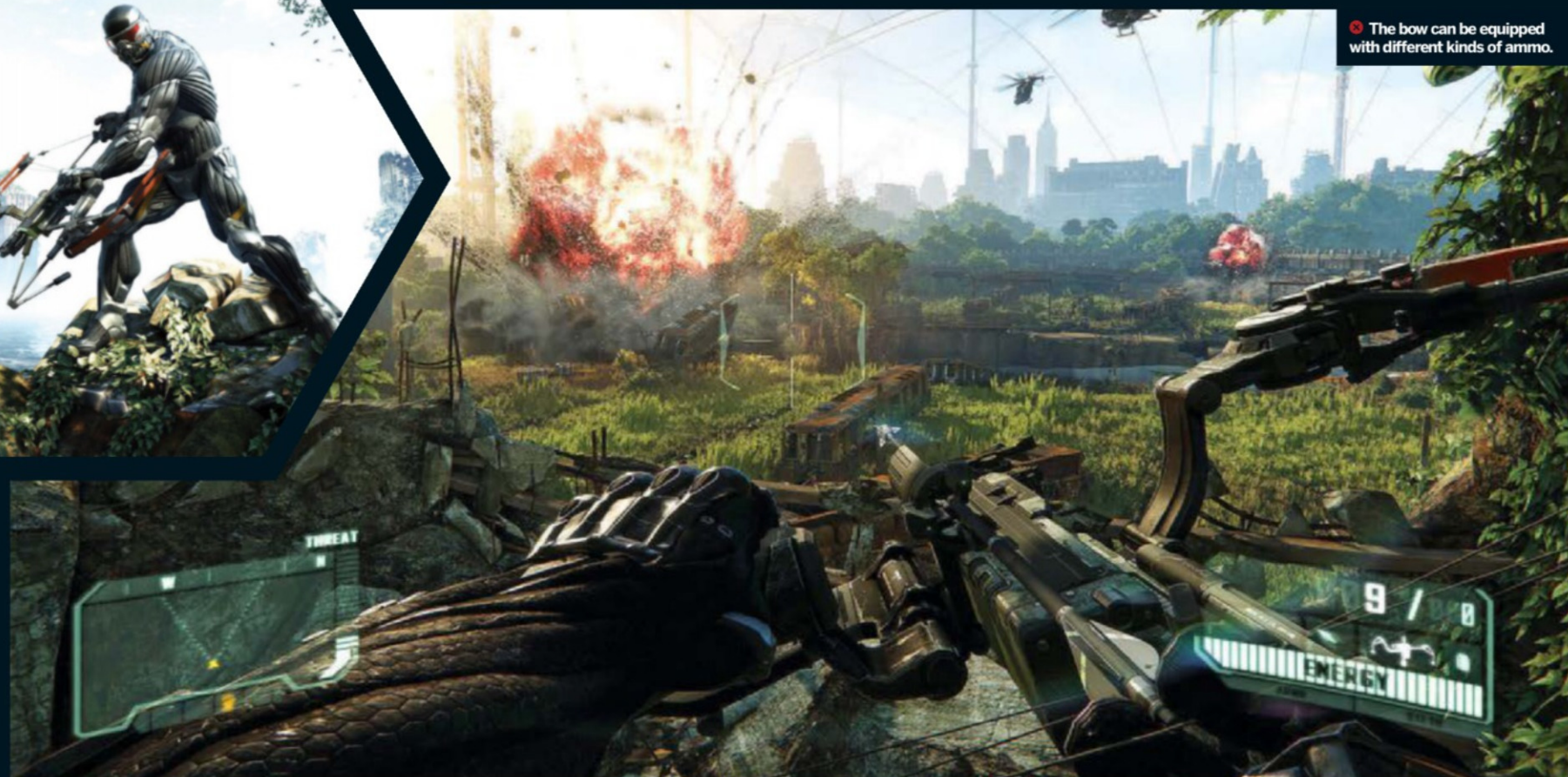
We can't say we're entirely surprised to hear this. As good as *Crysis 3* looks on the PlayStation 3, put it next to the PC version and the difference is night and day. Graphics aren't everything of course – even Crytek

happily admits this – but at the same time it's impossible to deny that the ever-evolving PC market has sped away from the comparatively underpowered current-gen consoles, leaving them choking on its dust. So is Read hankering after PS4 for what his studio wants to achieve?

"I think everybody pretty much is at this point!" he laughs. "Pushing ahead and creating new tools and innovations and putting these tools in designers' hands... I think there's definitely a place for a bigger focus on gameplay sometimes, but I think there's also a place where we need to keep accelerating this. The PC is light years ahead at this point and it'll be interesting what happens with the next generation of consoles and whether they're going to be able to hold out as long as they did with this generation just given how quickly technology is advancing at this point."

Then again, the progression of hardware isn't the only important factor to consider in the current market. The rise of free-to-play is the industry's current hot topic, with more and more developers looking at new financial models as retail figures continue to drop year on year. It's a discussion that Crytek has already waded into, but it's clear Read still sees value in the traditional console experience.

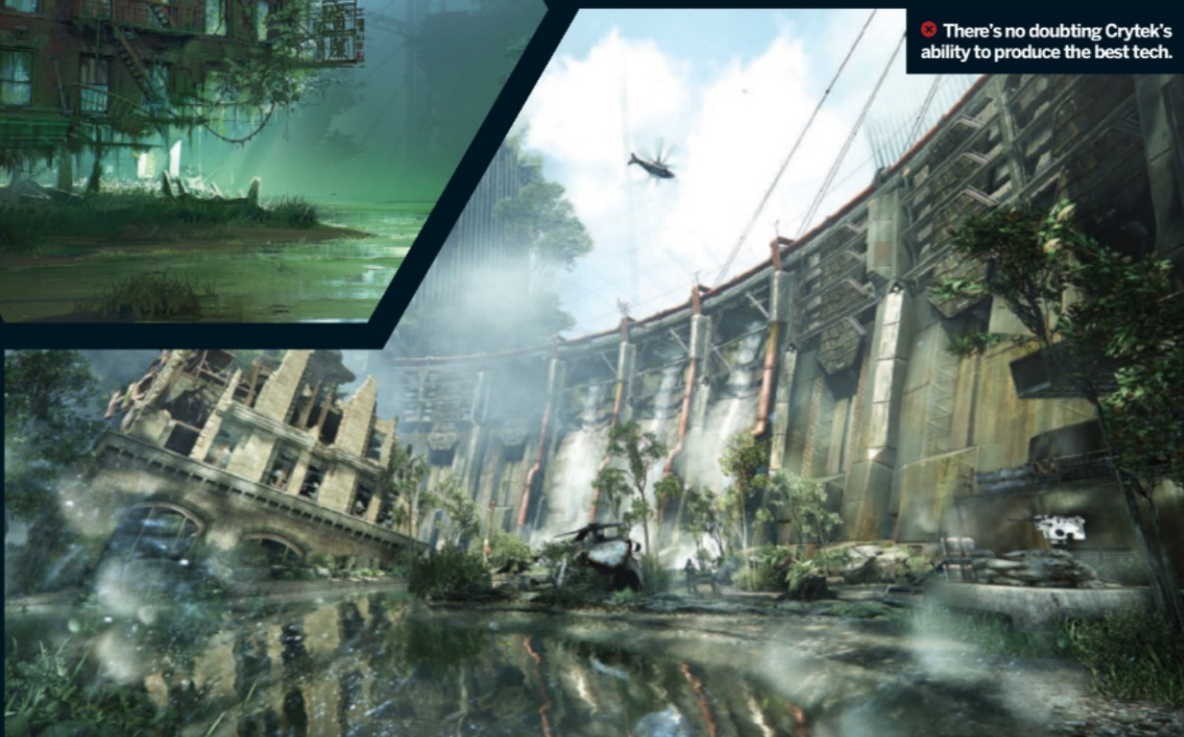
"This is a whole argument unto itself," he says. "Everyone's watching *Dust 514* on PlayStation and where that's potentially going to go as really one of the first free-to-play [console games] with micro-transactions built into it. I think there's room on there for that and I think you're probably going to see some big changes, but I think there's still room for maintaining the pay-up-front games as well. People talk a lot now about all single-player games [being] obsolete, that they're going to disappear and it's all about multiplayer, and I really don't think that's true at all. There are quite a large number of people still



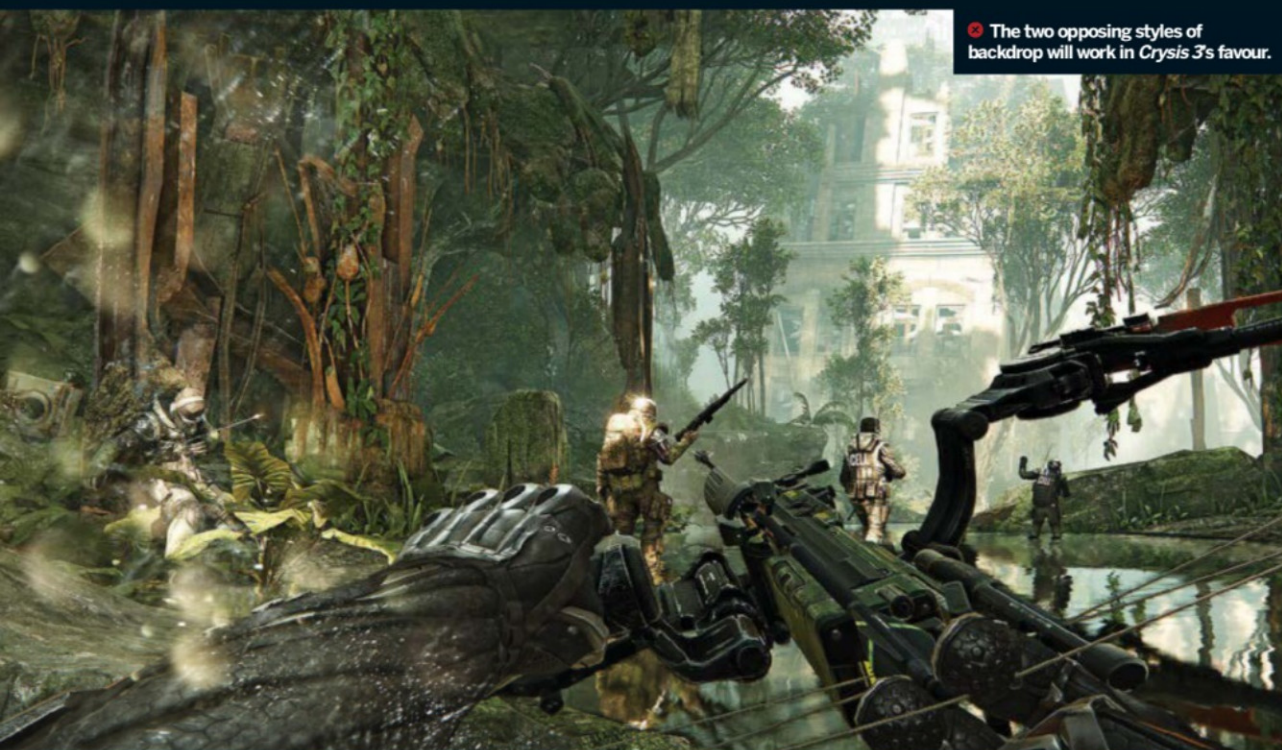
WHY CRYISIS 3 IS THE ULTIMATE SEQUEL



There's no doubting Crytek's ability to produce the best tech.



The two opposing styles of backdrop will work in *Crysis 3*'s favour.



out there that love single-player games. I think there's also a whole number of ways, especially over the next five to ten years that we're going to see single-player games evolve into something different, and what that is we'll have to wait and see. But it's definitely an interesting bullet point right now [with regard to] where the next-gen consoles are going to go."

So if Crytek is watching next-gen consoles with great interest, you can probably take that as a near-as-damnit guarantee that we'll see *Crysis* return on said hardware. We may have seen the last of the likes of Prophet, Psycho and company, though that's not the spoiler you might think it is. Instead, it may just be that this third instalment marks the closing of this particular chapter in the *Crysis* universe.

"That would probably be the best way to put it," agrees Read. "Back in 2007, when our CEO Cevat [Yerli, co-founder and president of Crytek]

said he had originally cited this to be a trilogy I actually meant to ask him this question. Whether we're going to do three games and it was going to go on further I guess is another question that would be specifically for him to answer, but I think what we've done over the years is to build the IP out and maintain it. Over the past five years we've done a pretty good job to take it beyond this [story] and into new places but still contained within the *Crysis* universe itself. But yes, this is kind of a finale to this piece."

If *Crysis 3* is an end point for this particular narrative strand, it certainly appears to be going out on a high. It's another boundary-pushing shooter that feels like a *Best Of Crysis* while offering its own unique bonus tracks. Sure, it might make the PS3 creak and groan at the edges, but it promises an action-packed climax to a trilogy that should finally cement the idea that *Crysis* deserves to become as famous for how it plays as how it looks. ❌



CENTRAL PERKS

READ REVEALS THE KEYS TO CRYISIS 3'S IMPROVED MULTIPLAYER COMPONENT

1 LEARN FROM MISTAKES

Crysis 2's multiplayer game was developed at Crytek UK, formerly Free Radical Design, of *Timesplitters* fame. But it wasn't an easy transition for the developer, and the online element felt like a bit of an afterthought. "We didn't really get a lot of playtesting done to really test the mechanisms out," admits Read. "Particularly as things changed so drastically between 1 and 2, and I also think there was a comfort level when they first came into the company and they were thrown into working on this project specifically but those [problems] really don't exist now."

2 GET USER FEEDBACK

Read discussed the importance of user testing for the single-player game, but it's every bit as important for the multiplayer side, too. "We've made a number of changes on that front, from heavy reviews from external parties – having them come into the office and give us tons of feedback on the game – and also EA has its own in-house teams that have been doing quality checks on stuff like that as well. We just did a closed alpha, too – more of a technical test, really, but we also managed to collect some telemetry data off of that which has been very positive."

3 WORK WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Evidently, Read is keen to avoid some of the problems that affected *Crysis 2*. To which end, he stated his desire to foster a strong community around the game, and make the general multiplayer user experience much more welcoming. He's aware, too, that ensuring the online side of things runs smoothly is absolutely crucial. "Of course, the server technology in general is the other thing we've changed up, so that's a lot more stable [than *Crysis 2*]. Now we're looking at how we can support that moving forward, as well as the community itself."

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REVIEWS

We play games and give them a score

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Call Of Duty: Black Ops II

The king still reigns



This year's *Call Of Duty* has arrived with some seriously lofty expectations. The 2010 original was, and still remains, one of the most successful videogames of all time, hoovering up over a billion dollars after just a single month of sitting on the shelves of supermarkets and game stores. In 2011 we saw the arrival of Infinity Ward's *Modern Warfare 3*, a sequel that turned out to be the strongest entry in the *Modern Warfare* series to date in spite of the Zampella/West hoopla surrounding its release.

Still, two years on and Treyarch's knack for obliterating records looks set to continue. Case in point: after just a single day on sale, *Black Ops II* has raked in half of that billion dollar haul its sibling managed to clock up, so we here at **Play** expect nothing short of stratospheric numbers by the time the bean counters at Activision have finished tallying things up. Record-breaking aside, what's really interesting about *Black Ops II* is the developer's approach to crafting the sequel. Treyarch could have played it all very safe by simply re-treading familiar ground, but didn't. *Call Of Duty* continues to be one of the few series that can easily get by on popularity and hype, but instead the team opted to take a cast iron formula that's been perfected by both the Santa Monica-based developer as well as its rivals at Infinity Ward, and – shock horror – change it up a little.

It's an incredibly bold move and one that pays off in spades, especially in the games' single-player campaign, which has been considerably beefed up in comparison to that of the 2010 original. Now at the outset of each mission you're given the option to craft bespoke loadouts and equip perks, much like you've been so used to doing in the game's multiplayer mode over the years. Even the missions themselves do more to encourage exploration, rewarding you with some useful intelligence or, in some cases, a better weapon to slaughter the minions of the game's nefarious villain, Raul Menendez, who also happens to serve as the anchor for *Black Ops II*'s duelling storylines.



DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Treyarch
Price
£49.99
Players
1-4

Genre
Action-adventure
Age Rating
18+

Website
callofduty.com/blackops

Twitter
[@CallOfDuty](https://twitter.com/CallOfDuty)
Facebook
facebook.com/BlackOps2Game



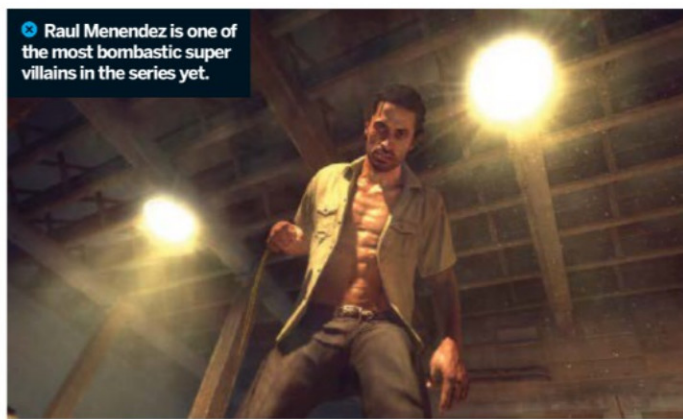
Flip-flopping between missions in the Eighties with returning hero, Alex Mason, and his son, David in the year 2025, both narratives are suitably bonkers despite the fact that Hollywood scribe, David Goyer, had a hand in weaving them. Playing through Mason senior's tale, you're taken on a dark and twisted tale that charts the rise to infamy of Menendez, a Nicaraguan narco-terrorist and leader of a group of diehards known as the Cordis Die. Despite being referred to as the single largest threat to the free world since Bin Laden, Menendez is arguably one of the showiest villains the entire *Call Of Duty* franchise has ever seen. At one point Goyer and his writing partners attempt to humanise him in an earlier mission that puts you in control of him during a

Treyarch could have played it all very safe by simply re-treading familiar ground, but didn't

botched raid on his home that also happens to take the life of his sister. It fails for a number of reasons, the most obvious of which is that one mission later we're watching Menendez behave like all the other murderous maniacs we've taken down in previous shooters with aplomb. Still, for just a beat or two, Menendez manages to transcend the norm and become a villain with some genuinely surprising depth (even if the aforementioned handling is quite clumsy), his motivations for total world domination often weightier than that of the game's entire playable cast.



This horseback mission is one of the weakest in the game, with its awkward objectives.



Raul Menendez is one of the most bombastic super villains in the series yet.

Or you could try



Killzone 3 Issue 200
An explosive and riveting game that pushes all the right buttons. **80%**



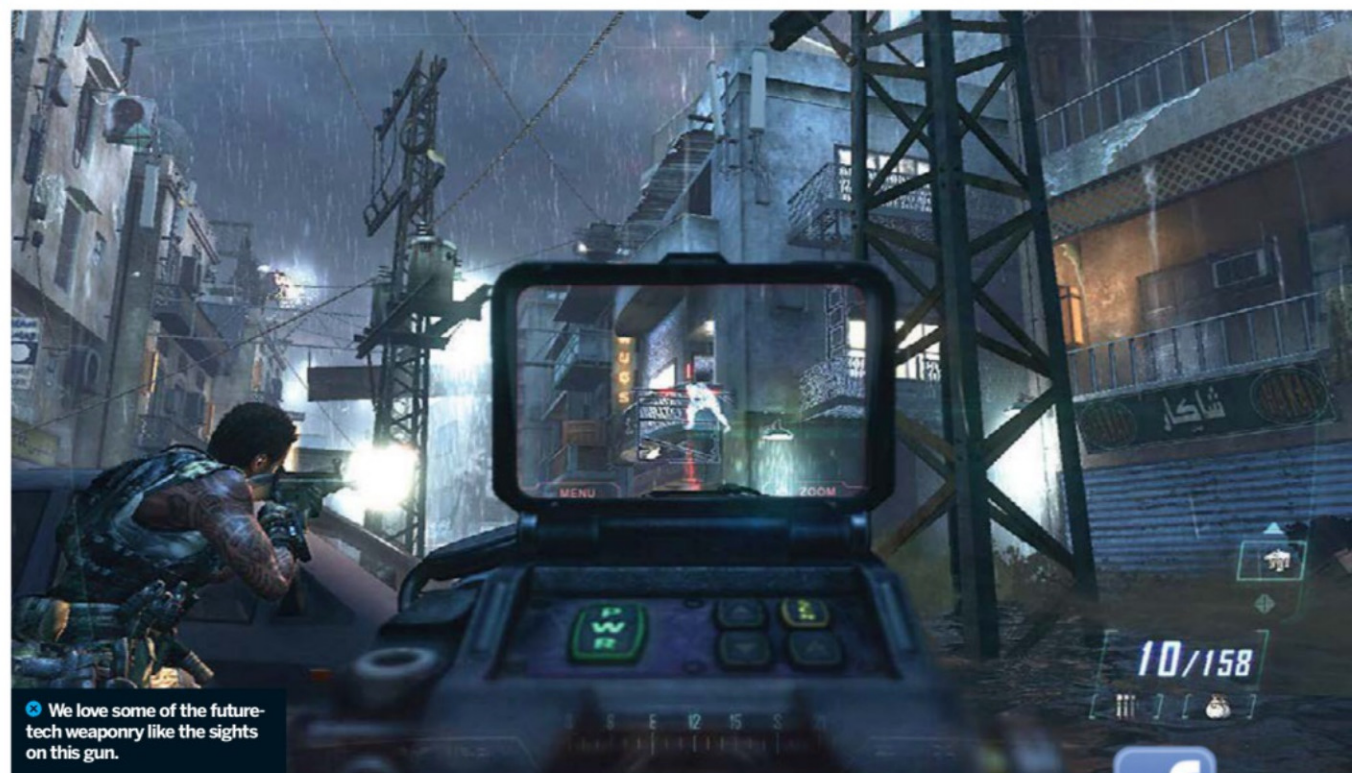
Kill Confirmed makes a much-welcomed return in *Black Ops II*.

Call Of Duty: Black Ops II



Fast-forward to the year 2025 and it's all cloaking armour, robot spiders and a huge roster of awesomely enticing weaponry that too often appears for an incredibly brief amount of gameplay time, before disappearing completely into the ether in later chapters for no apparent reason. Regardless, the switching back and forth between the two time-frames offers up two very distinct flavours to *Black Ops II*. Mason senior's sections feel like the *Call Of Duty* we all know and have grown accustomed to over the years, whereas his son's feel like a glimpse into the future of the series in the hands of Treyarch. Up until now, the campaigns in *Call Of Duty* were almost looked down upon, something to be rushed through as quickly as possible before you moved onto and assimilated an entire twelve whole months of multiplayer and game packs.

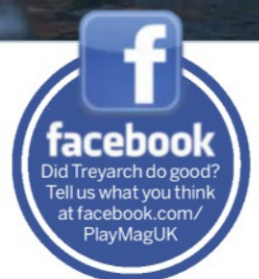
With *Black Ops II*, Treyarch has yet again bucked the trend by way of a thought-provoking, branching storyline that really does require you to think about your actions rather than pummel the bejesus out of the trigger finger in a rush to watch the credits roll. In total, there are six endings for you to experience, each of which is tied to the decisions you make at certain points. Layered on top of these are even more reasons to play through the solo sections on multiple occasions, including a swathe of mission-based objectives crying out to be bested at every turn. >



We love some of the future-tech weaponry like the sights on this gun.

ONLINE MODE RATED The best multiplayer in the world?

Black Ops II's whopping roster of features offers up more bang for your buck than just most other games out there. This includes a massively revamped Zombies mode called TranZit, which thrusts you and three other players onto a bus ride from hell in a post-apocalyptic world. Killstreaks have also been replaced with the more player-friendly Scorestreaks, a new system that rewards you for collaborating on the battlefield and completing objectives. And if you're new to this whole multiplayer malarkey, be sure to check out Combat Training, which offers a safe (ish) place to level up before dabbling in the big leagues with Core and Hardcore modes. ★★★★★





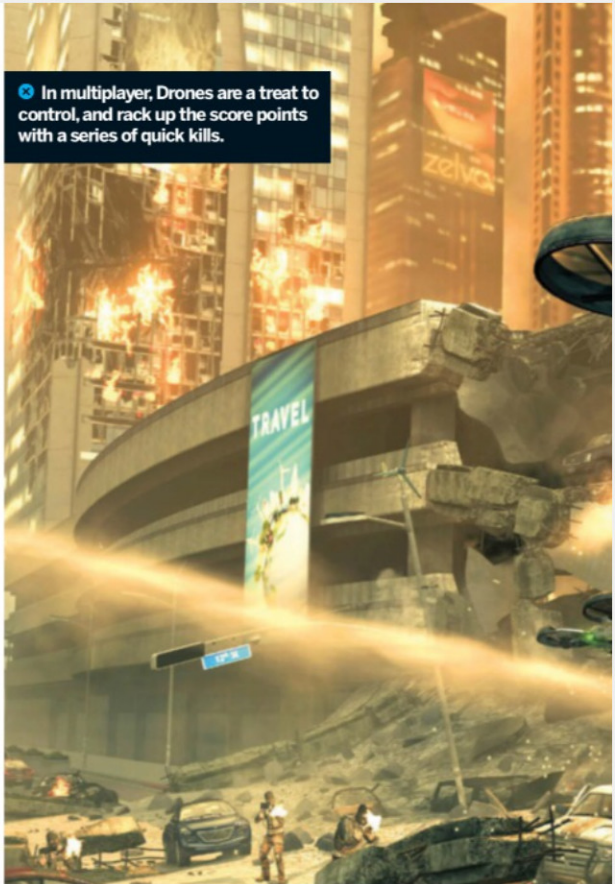
• The zombies are back in *Black Ops II* and this time they've brought a ruddy great bus with them.



• Say hello to The Claw, gigantic (and sluggish) robotic walkers that waded into battle and clear the way.



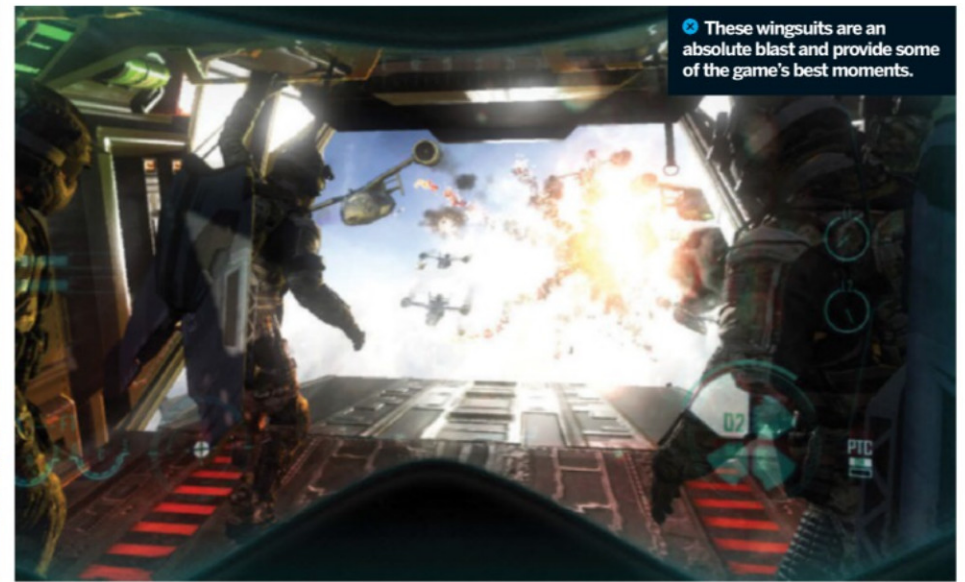
• In multiplayer, Drones are a treat to control, and rack up the score points with a series of quick kills.



> And then there are the Strike Force missions, Treyarch's attempt at infusing strategic gameplay into the fold by allowing you to take control of multiple units on the battlefield via a top down view. Of all the shiny new gameplay mechanics the developer threw into the mix, this one feels like it's had the least attention paid to it. For one, they are optional – but purists will ultimately want to master all four Strike Force missions to experience one of the game's happier endings – and secondly, the AI is nothing shy of moronic.

Your troops barely engage with the enemy, instead electing to take up positions at defensive points on the map and refusing to move of their own accord. And because of that the strategic element is immediately rendered redundant for gamers with very little patience (isn't that almost all of us?), forcing you to make the leap into the combat boots of a trooper and play through the entire mission in FPS mode, much like the rest of the game. These Strike Force missions are not a complete disaster, they are just a little more complex to master than we had initially expected, thanks in no small part to the head-scratching command structure mapped to the SixAxis controller. If Treyarch is absolutely insistent on returning to these sidebar missions in a future instalment, we expect them to be subjected to a fairly meaty design overhaul.

While the changes to the single-player campaign are undoubtedly the most significant the series has seen to date, the multiplayer component of *Black Ops II* does get its fair share of gameplay tweaks. At the top of that list is the new Pick 10 system, which completely alters the way you kit out your character before leaping into a match. For a series that had already perfected the weapons loadout with each of its subsequent iterations, it's quite the ballsy move for Treyarch. Gone are the days of fixed weapon sets and combat classes, and in its place rests a new system that allows you to cook up any number of weaponry combinations before venturing out into the battlefield.



For example, you can launch into a map wielding just a primary weapon but with a myriad of attachments. Or you could forgo that secondary grenade in favour of tacking on another of one of the game's many perks. The choice is all entirely yours. It works and works incredibly well, so long as you stick within the game's ten-item parameter. Each weapon also has its own levelling system, meaning that every time you've completed certain objectives using it you'll be handed a nifty upgrade, which you'll immediately want to take for a test drive on the next map. It truly is a breath of fresh air, and we half expect Infinity Ward to take notice and alter its own multiplayer loadouts come the inevitable arrival of 2013's *Modern Warfare 4*.

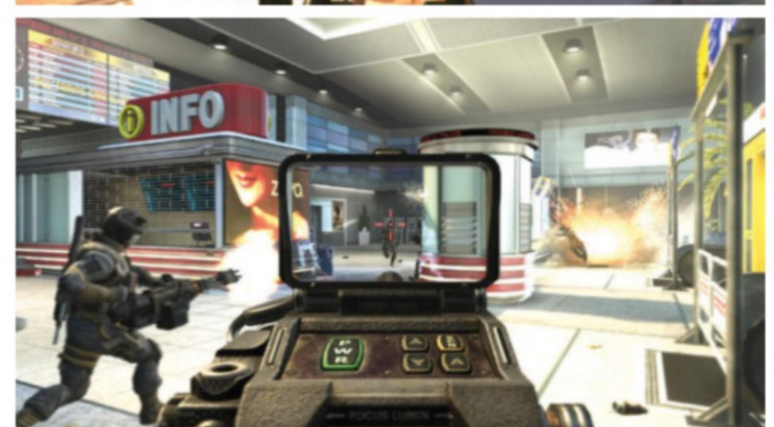
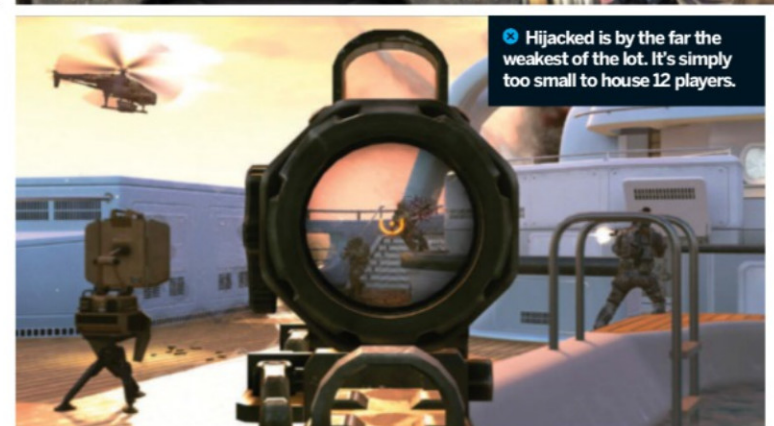
The second most significant alteration to *Black Ops II*'s multiplayer mode is the nixing of the Killstreak, which has been replaced by the more flexible and player-friendly Scorestreaks. By killing enemies, completing objectives and capturing various points on the map you're rewarded with points, which in turn can be used to unlock one of your three equipped

Scorestreaks. These range from the usual UAVS to some of the niftier weapons like the Drones or the annoyingly devastating Lightning Strike Scorestreak bonus. Of course, the catch is that if you're killed you're immediately stripped of all Scorestreak points, so you'll have

Menendez is arguably one of the showiest villains the entire Call Of Duty franchise has ever seen

to be much smarter about how you approach the maps in battle if you want to make the most of these perks.

As for the maps, there are 14 in total (15 if you snagged the bonus pre-order Nuketown 2025 map), all of which pay homage at one point or another to the *Black Ops II*'s twelve multiplayer modes, including series stalwarts Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, Demolition and the new guy, Hardpoint. While there are plenty of highlights on offer including Overflow and Plaza, the worst offender by a long stretch is Hijacked, which throws you and your teammates onto >





> a cramped yacht with hardly any room to manoeuvre. The end result is usually a maniacal shootout that gets very frustrating, very fast. Speaking of hardships, everyone knows how maddening it can be starting out in *Call Of Duty*'s multiplayer modes.

To tackle this problem, Treyarch has introduced the idea of Combat Training, which is essentially a series of specially crafted takes on Team Deathmatch and the game's objective-based modes. In each mode you can level up from one through to ten, battling both human opponents and computer-controlled bots. Once you've reached that all-important level ten you're immediately cut off and thrust into *Black Ops II*'s Core and Hardcore modes. You can still team up with friends to hunt down and take out reams of bots, but you won't get any experience points for this mindless AI slaughter. Of all the additions to *Black Ops II*'s multiplayer modes, this will certainly be

one of the most welcomed ones for gamers arriving late to the party.

All of this brings us to Zombies, which originally started life out as a sort of goofy mini-game and knowing nod to Valve's shuffling shooter, *Left 4 Dead* before evolving into its own campaign here in *Black Ops II*. Right now there is just one large solo map on offer, which is broken down into smaller sub maps when traversed in TranZit mode. Each of these mini maps – a farm, bus depot and town – are all connected by a single rickety bus and its robotic driver (in a knowing nod to *Total Recall*'s Johnny Cabs) that trundles through each area on a continuous loop.

When playing TranZit you can choose to work as a team with other players by staying on the bus and battling hordes of the undead, or jump off at a stop and explore each area in a bid to uncover its secrets and unlock numerous upgrades. It certainly pays to explore because by scouring the environment with a keen eye, you'll pick up all sorts of post apocalyptic tat that can be welded together at blueprints stations to craft everything from shields to portable generators and loopy-looking zombie decoys.

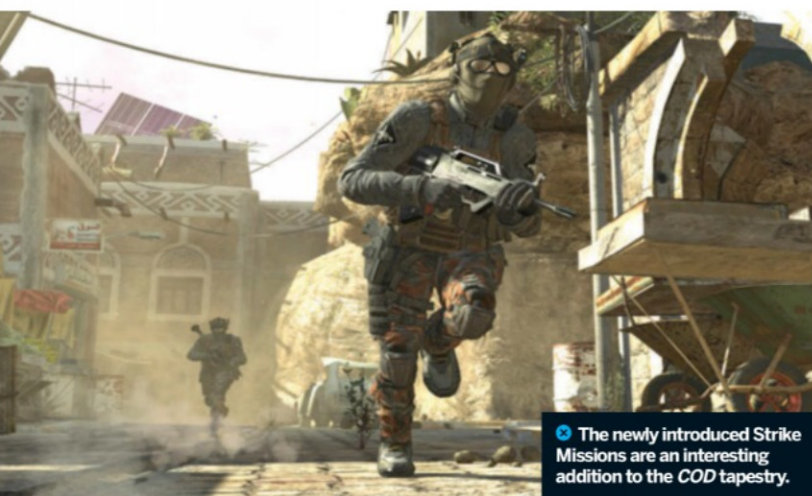
Upgrades aren't just tacked onto your character, the bus itself can also be retrofitted with everything from a hatch that grants quick access to the roof, or even a snowplough for tearing through any walkers that might get in the way of your apocalyptic party ride. Be warned though, staying off the bus for too long means you'll get left behind and forced to survive either as a group or alone until it swings around again. If you're fortunate enough to find yourself stranded with a buddy or two, it can be a blast trying to make it to the



next round, but if you're alone the chances of survival are slim to none – especially if you're foolish enough to wander off the beaten track. The downside to this rather enjoyable mode is that Treyarch fails to clearly relay any sort of information to you at the outset, forcing you into a series of deaths and restarts before you eventually figure out what it is you need to be doing to win the damn thing.

The original and bombastic Survival mode makes a welcome return, confining you to one of the three mini maps in an all-out battle to make it through as many rounds as possible. It can be a lot of fun but a little tight in spots where sections of the mini maps tend to cramp up because of ill-conceived level design. The last and most disappointing of the available Zombies modes is Grief, a four on four mode that charges you with competing against each other until only one person is left standing. The catch is that you can't freely slaughter the opposing team members, but instead have to use the environment, slabs of meat and shambling waves of zombies to lure them into traps and choke points. On paper it sounds fun, but when played it just turns into an incredibly messy affair when players scramble to revive a downed man or you find yourself in an infuriating skirmish to secure a weapons cache.

Regardless of what you make of the new expanded Zombies mode, it doesn't detract from the fact that *Black Ops II* is essentially three games on a single Blu-ray disc, each one of its multiple modes offering up a different kind of experience depending on what it is that you're after when you pick up a game like this. *Black Ops II* is a hugely ambitious effort



The newly introduced Strike Missions are an interesting addition to the COD tapestry.



In one of the game's most riveting missions, Los Angeles falls to its knees when Menendez gains a foothold.





• This is Michael Rooker's Harper, Mason junior's partner in the 2025 missions.

on Treyarch's behalf, and one that should certainly be saluted for its bravery. Sure, there are some design snafus like the over complicatedness of the Strike Force missions or the hazy objective directions in TranZit, but this is undeniably a more complete game package than its 2010 predecessor.

Black Ops II is certainly not the shooter we have been expecting since its announcement; instead it's a step in the right direction for a series that could have very easily have gotten away with playing it safe at the height of its success. Naturally, when you peel back the layers and take a closer look at it, this is still unmistakably a *Call Of Duty* experience, but Treyarch has done far more than what was expected of it. Of course, if you've purposefully made a point of avoiding *Call Of Duty* up until now you're probably unlikely to be swayed by this latest entry, or our constant sense of surprise at just how much of a risk Activision allowed Treyarch to take with its cash cow. Now all we can do is just sit back and watch how Infinity Ward chooses to respond to having the gauntlet well and truly thrown down. The floor is yours, *Modern Warfare*.

Sebastian Williamson

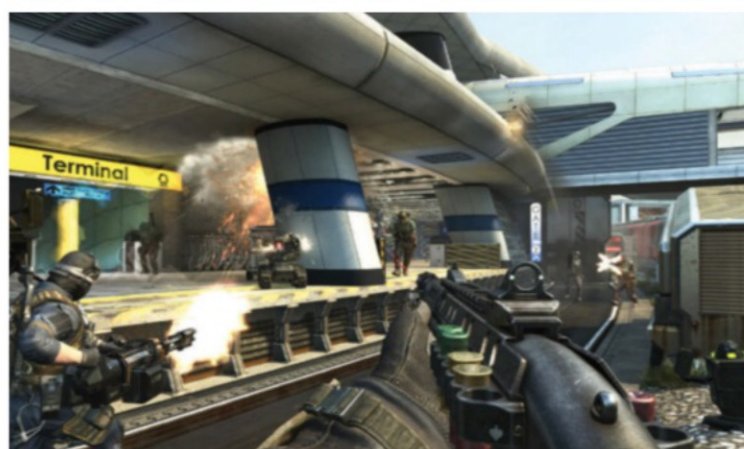
VERDICT

Black Ops II is definitely not what you expected. Yes, this is a *Call Of Duty* experience at its core, but developer Treyarch has gone above and beyond what was necessary, delivering one of the most complete, albeit shaky, packages the series has ever seen.

80%



• This mission sees you infiltrate a military compound in the Hkabo Razi Mountains, Myanmar.

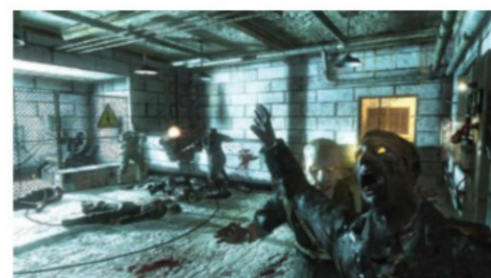


CALL OF DUTY VS ITSELF

Comparing the series' various campaigns over the years



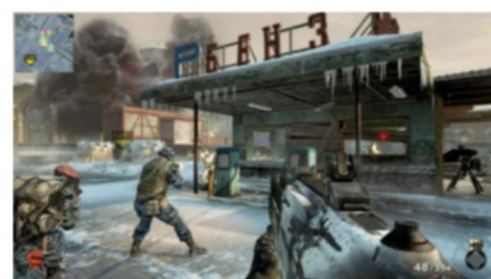
CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE COMPARED TO BLACK OPS II: Still the daddy in terms of story, and definitely superior to *Black Ops II* in design, *Modern Warfare* set the template for contemporary *Call Of Duty* games. *Black Ops II*'s campaign doesn't touch it.



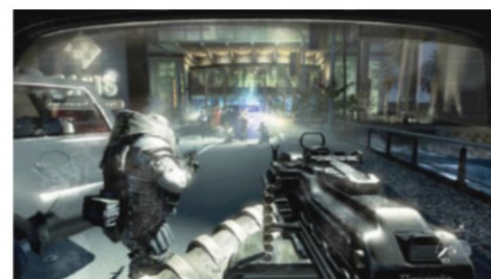
CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR COMPARED TO BLACK OPS II: Treyarch's first shot at a *Call Of Duty* campaign is extremely pale compared to *Black Ops II*, but that's okay, because it was still a massive improvement on the previous effort with *Call Of Duty 3*.



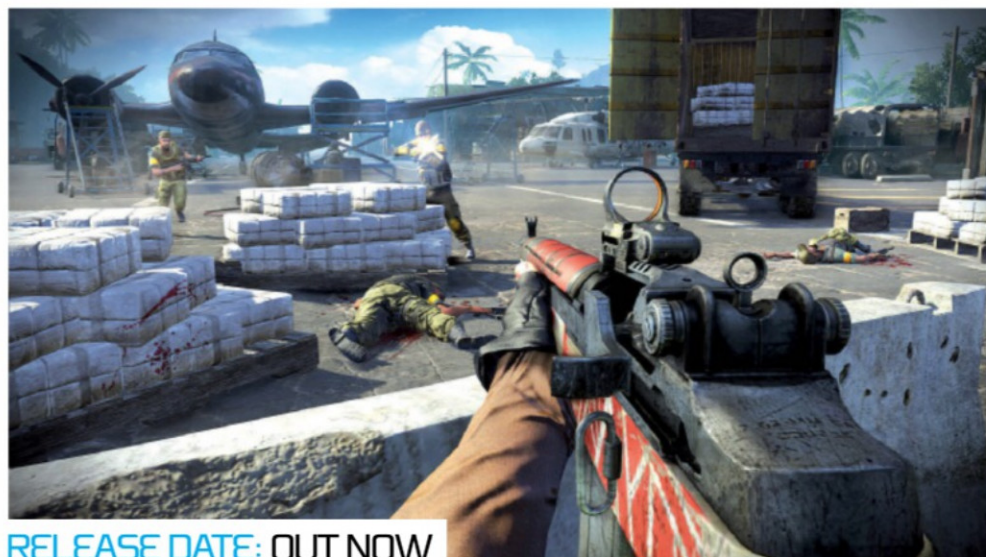
CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 2 COMPARED TO BLACK OPS II: The master of level design, *Modern Warfare 2* has the kind of adrenaline-fuelled structure and pace that *Black Ops II* can't even dream of emulating. Never mind, eh?



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS COMPARED TO BLACK OPS II: In all honesty, the story in *Black Ops* is about as good as the sequel, though it gains bonus points for the quite remarkable use of *Sympathy For The Devil* by The Rolling Stones.



CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3 COMPARED TO BLACK OPS II: Slightly better, actually, with a campaign that's like a best-of compilation of the other two games, complete with a ludicrous finale that sees Captain Price basically getting in a mech suit.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Far Cry 3

Another day for me and me in paradise



DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Ubisoft Montreal
Entertainment
Price
£49.99
Players
1-14
Genre
FPS
Age Rating
18+
Website
www.farcry3.com
Twitter
@farcrygame
Facebook
facebook.com/
farcry3game



There can be little doubt that Ubisoft is the bravest of the big publishers. Where others concentrate on smoothing off as many edges as possible to produce ultra-polished (and often bland) triple-A fodder, Ubisoft encourages ideas-driven development, even if that leads to failure. 2008's *Far Cry 2* was perhaps the most obvious example of this culture – an extraordinarily brave, bleak, system-driven shooter that divided critics and fans alike. Those who loved *Far Cry 2*, though, really loved *Far Cry 2*.

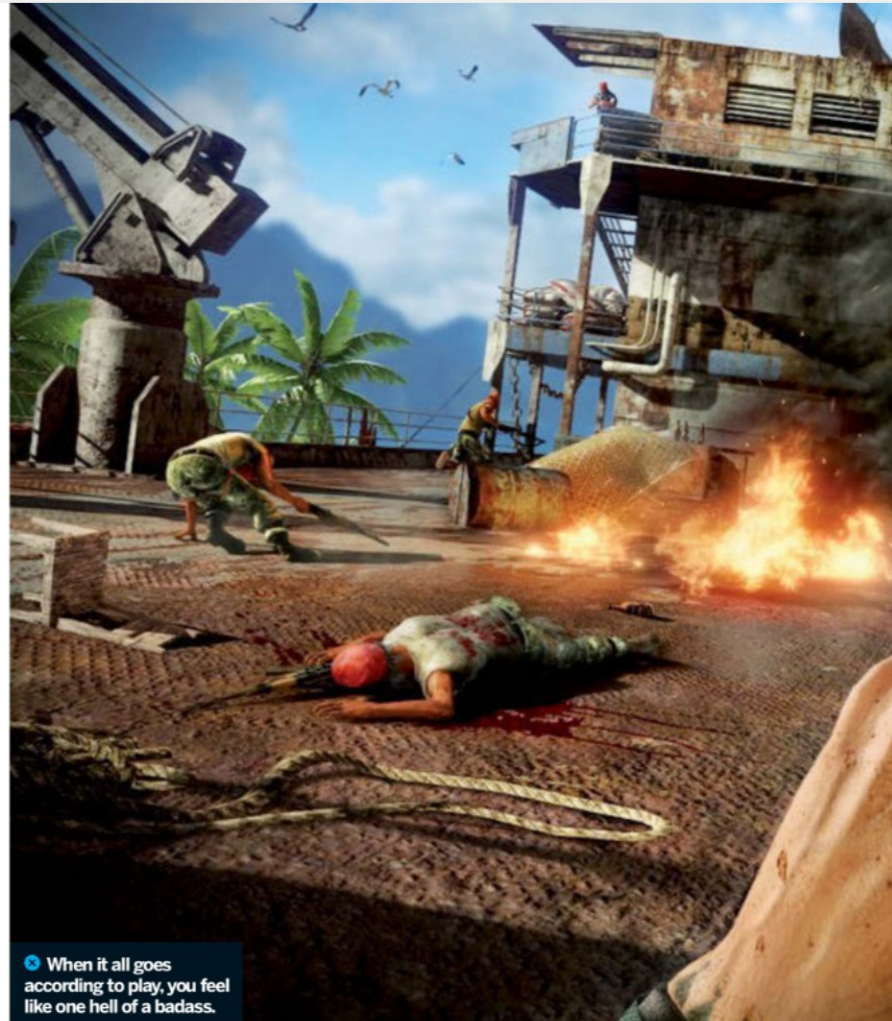
While *Far Cry 2* had clear problems and questionable design decisions throughout, it introduced three concurrent systems that defined its combat encounters; fire, enemy injuries, and the buddy system. The first is self-explanatory and immediately gratifying, but the others only revealed themselves to those who stuck with the game. The way enemies would tend to injured comrades, or chase down the player when crippled, led to the types of emergent stories that would light up message boards for months. Add in a system where a buddy character would randomly join in your fight, risking permadeath, and you had a recipe for greatness, even in a problematic framework.

Far Cry 3 keeps only one of those systems, ditching the other two in favour of a much more

consistent, rules-driven, polished world. Yes, you can still set fire to huge sections of the jungle and it's even more impressive than before, but enemies are now either dead or fully-functioning, and there ain't a buddy in sight. It's something that'll be instantly disappointing to *Far Cry 2* lovers, but this isn't *Far Cry 2*. It's a huge, gorgeous beast of a game that marries the core tenets of *Far Cry* gameplay (an open world with skirmishes approachable in any way you can think of) with a vast island landscape to explore, and crucially, to hunt.

Yes, Ubisoft may have ditched a couple of systems, but it has introduced a new one – wildlife. Every inch of Rook Island is teeming with animals, from spritely goats, chubby pigs and noisy boars all the way up to hissing Komodo dragons and snarling Sumatran tigers. There are even bull sharks swimming in the water, and coming across one when you're not expecting it is so terrifying this reviewer had to pause the game and walk out of the room, shaking his head.

The animals do whatever they want, so a tiger might attack a nearby goat, it might launch itself at an enemy, or it might stalk and pounce on you when you're setting up a perfect sniper shot. It's a layer of emergent madness that's quite unlike anything else. *Red Dead* nudged



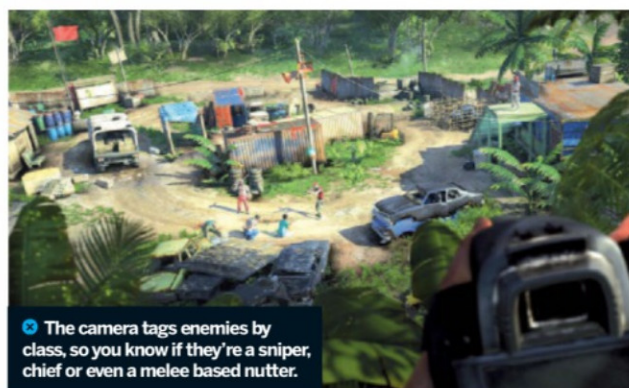
When it all goes according to play, you feel like one hell of a badass.

towards this at times, but it wasn't as integral to the experience. They're not just there for show, either. You'll need to hunt and skin animals to craft almost anything useful, from a rucksack for loot to a pouch for your ammo.

And why do you need to quickly learn Bear Grylls-level survival skills? Well, after you (young, handsome and out-of-his-element Jason Brody) and your travelling companions are captured by madman Vaas, you manage to break free from his prison camp and set about rescuing your mates. But you know nothing. Thankfully, you're taken in by the local warrior tribe, the Rakyat, who all sound like Jemaine from *Flight Of The Conchords* and scored with tattoos, or 'the tatau', gifting you skill-tree abilities like machete takedowns or a steady aim.

After a couple of hours in Rook Island, you don't feel like a rookie any more. *Far Cry 3* features some 38 narrative missions, all of which are bookended by marvellously acted and animated interactions with the game's bonkers cast, and just playing through them would take well over 15 hours. Doing that alone, though, would be criminal. The world boasts an almost endless supply of side quests, ranging from hunting missions to *Assassin's Creed*-style camp liberations.

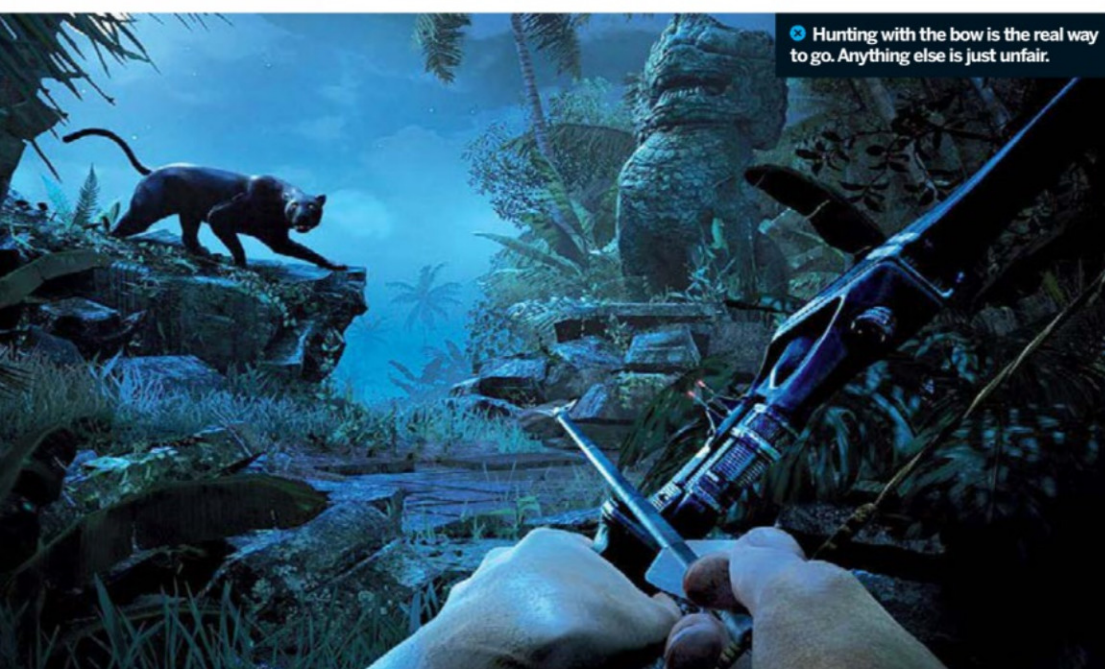
These liberations actually provide the most open gameplay in *Far Cry 3*. They're exactly as you'd imagine; you find a distant vantage point, use your magical camera (don't know where Brody found this, but it's definitely better than an iPhone 5) to scan the area and tag all the enemies within (who can then be seen through walls, for some unknown reason), and then plan your attack. Stealth is normally the best option, but difficult to maintain – usually you'll take out one or two guys and be spotted, reverting to an in-and-out predatory attack as you pick the opposition off one by one. Watching them



The camera tags enemies by class, so you know if they're a sniper, chief or even a melee based nutter.



Vehicles are everywhere, and no one cares if you nick them. And then drive them into the water.



freak out and shoot blindly into the thick grass is especially gratifying, and as you level up (an XP system drives *Far Cry 3*), you'll unlock some startling abilities, including the power to stab a guy in the neck, pull the pin out of his grenade and kick him into his mates. When it all clicks – man, is it something to behold.

And even when things don't go to plan, *Far Cry 3* is a very solid shooter – more so than its predecessor. The weapons feel great, the blasting is cathartic, and the destructible and flammable scenery helps to create some serious spectacle. Oddly, though, many of the narrative missions ditch the open world for linear blasts that could have been plucked from any shooter you care to mention.

These vary wildly in quality. The more open missions are just as enjoyable as camp liberations, and some heavily scripted events nail the spectacle you'd normally expect in *Call Of Duty*, but there are too many that

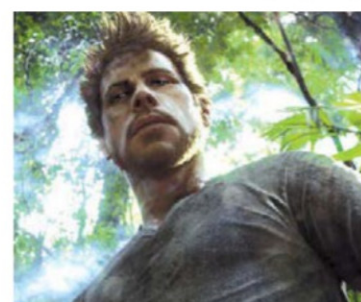
throw enemies at you in narrow corridors and barely allow for any sort of tactical play. A lengthy section of missions towards the middle of the game sees *Far Cry 3* turn into a kind of first-person *Uncharted*, with mystical tombs, treasure and Brody constantly commentating on his surroundings. He even says 'no no no no' at one point. And whoever thought that chucking three heavy (juggernaut-style) enemies into the tail end of an escort mission has clearly been chewing on one too many mushrooms.

Thankfully, things do turn around, and the overarching narrative is both compelling and alluringly psychedelic. Hallucinogens are a pillar of the story and the gameplay, and there are some outstandingly trippy sections that really do leap out into the realms of the surreal. It helps, too, that Vaas is such an outstanding antagonist, brilliantly acted and truly creepy. Like a great cinema baddy, any time he's on >



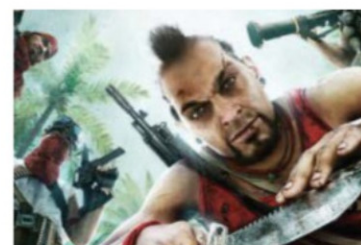
ISLAND LIFE

The who's who of *Far Cry 3* (early on, anyway)



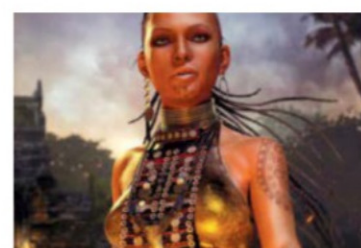
JASON BRODY

Our hero is just another Santa Monica pretty boy until he and his friends are captured by Vaas after a misguided skydive. Unlike most games, though, our Jason isn't a born leader or a fighter – it's his big brother Grant who breaks them out of the prison camp. Some unfortunate events later, though, and Jason has to quickly become one with the island and its tribe of warrior people, the Rakyat, if he is going to survive and rescue his friends.



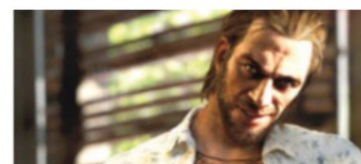
VAAWILHINE

The best videogame villain of the year? It's between this guy and *Black Ops*' sultry psycho Raul Menendez. Vaas is a curious, sociopathic, unusually motivated nut job, whose monologues to Brody are some of the most memorable and unsettling in any game ever. He's utterly captivating, in every sense of the word.



CITRA

The sultry, powerful leader of the Rakyat people is in touch with the heart of the jungle, and uses a powerful hallucinogen (loosely based on ayahuasca, presumably) as a spirit guide. She is as enthralling as Vaas, in a completely different way, and her encounters with Brody are the game's most provocative scenes.



BUCK

A ghastly Australian hitman with an eye for the younger man. The nightmarish Buck is on a permanent semi-drunk power trip, and enjoys having control over Brody during their early-game encounters.



DENNIS ROGERS

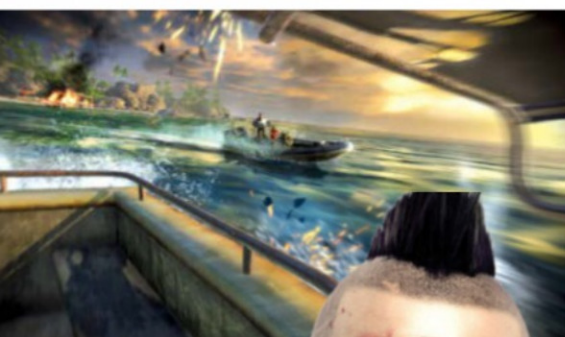
The Liberian ex-pat who rescues you at the beginning of the game. Dennis seems like a genuine sort, but it's difficult to truly trust anyone in this world. What are his motivations, exactly?



DR. ALEC EARNHART

The Terence McKenna-like 'doctor', who conducts experiments in psilocybin and is in a permanent state of psychedelia. He lives in a mansion at the far west of the island, on top of mushroom-coated caves. Best not to stay down there too long.





The game's trippier moments are outstandingly well executed.



> screen is a treat, even if you want to put a bullet in between his sullen eyes.

So well realised, in fact, are some of the bolder sections of *Far Cry 3*'s story, that other parts feel totally out of place. Brody's aforementioned wittering robs the most atmospheric scenes of some of their gravity, while the endlessly repeating incidental dialogue constantly prods against your immersion. If this was a movie, it would be savaged for its wildly inconsistent tone, but it's not. Anything this big and open has to be afforded a few luxuries and a few missteps.

It's not perfect, though. The world chugs a little on PS3 – the machine's starting to show its age – and it certainly doesn't look anywhere near as beautiful as its PC brother. It's still a marvellous technical achievement, but one that feels a little hamstrung by the box you're playing it on.

Worse is the overbearing HUD, which revels in showing you how much XP you've gained,

A tiger might attack a nearby goat, it might launch itself at an enemy, or it might stalk and pounce on you when you're setting up a perfect sniper shot

what new crafting items are available, and what your mission objective is. None of this can be switched off, so you never truly feel like you're lost on the island, more that you're playing the videogame of being lost on the island. Thankfully, the intrusive and inane music can be muted so you can enjoy the sounds of the jungle.

Quite why, too, you have to find and scale huge radio masts to open up sections of the map is a mystery. The climbing mechanic is not fun, merely functional, and the views from the top are shrouded with a teal haze. It's just busy work, and while each climb is rewarded with new side quests and free guns, it's still a pain.

Overall, *Far Cry 3* is probably a less interesting game than *Far Cry 2* – particularly from a design



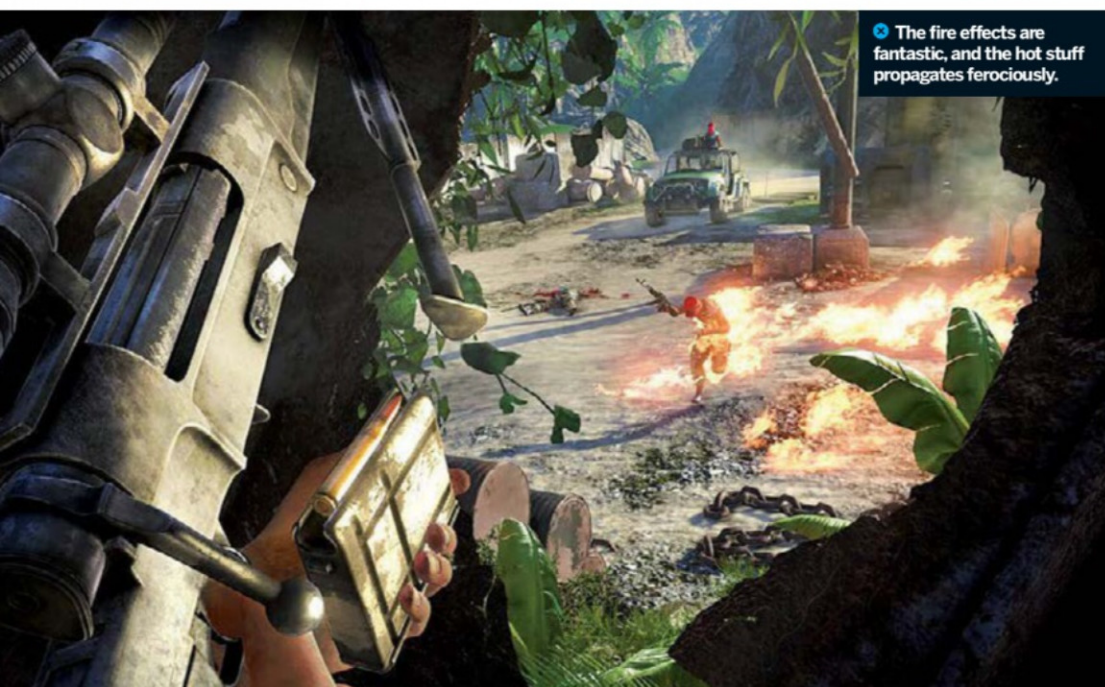


At no point are these guys fun to fight. In any game.

Far Cry 3



The Lion King 4 was quite a different film.



The fire effects are fantastic, and the hot stuff propagates ferociously.

ONLINE MODE RATED

Jungle brothers (and sisters) unite

FAR CRY 3'S four-player co-op is a mighty effort, featuring four brand new characters (including a hilariously swear-y Scot) and a fresh narrative. It's very *Left 4 Dead* or *Dead Island* in structure, but obviously features that same open-ended *Far Cry* gameplay. Coordinating assaults on camps with four players is going to be both exhilarating and hilarious, as it inevitably falls apart because the old guy set himself on fire or someone stood on a dog's tail. The multiplayer itself promises to be a decent affair, featuring standard levelling systems, as well as battle cries and a focus on team-mate support.

★★★★★



The character models in cut scenes are second only to *LA Noire* in realism.

perspective – but it is a more accessible and possibly more accomplished one. Certainly, those who struggled with the restraints, respawning checkpoints and degrading weapons of *Far Cry 2* will find a sequel that addresses each and all of these annoyances. It's a game that begs to be enjoyed.

By smoothing off those edges, though, *Far Cry 3* has lost some of the raw drama of its predecessor. As sublime as its combat can be, there's never a moment as real or shocking as losing a buddy in *Far Cry 2* (and the dreadful realization that your syringes just aren't going to save him – so you're going to have to put him out of his misery yourself). Instead, *Far Cry 3* makes its mark in its narrative (and maintains its Ubisoft progressiveness), taking you to places that no game has ever managed before. Some have tried to do psychedelia, but nothing has ever gone this deep. Not even close.

Ultimately, it's important to not judge what *Far Cry 3* isn't, but enjoy what it is. Yes, it isn't the genre-redefining *Far Cry 2* follow-up it could (and perhaps in an idealised world,

should) have been. It is, however, a beautiful, thrilling and supremely well-made open world shooter; a true epic. There's enough content to challenge open world RPGs, even, and unlike those games, the combat is as good as any FPS on PS3. If not better.

It's vital that games like this keep getting made. The triple-A world needs to be driven by ideas and concepts, it needs big games to make mistakes and take bold steps into new territories. *Far Cry 3* does all of this, and even though it's not the game some want it to be, it simply must be admired.

Jon Denton

VERDICT

A less brave game than its predecessor, but one that's more polished, accessible and probably more enjoyable to a wide section of the audience. And it's very interesting in its own right – a heady ayahuasca trip of a shooter on an unprecedented scale.

88%

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two

Expect Star Wars: Mickey Mouse to follow



DETAILS

Publisher
Disney Interactive
Developer
Junction Point
Price
£49.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Action-adventure
Age Rating
7+
Website
disney.co.uk/mickey
Twitter
@EpicMickey2
Facebook
facebook.com/
DisneyEpicMickey

PS3 Mickey Mouse is desperate to impress, or so *Epic Mickey 2* would have you believe. As a sequel to the much-derided Nintendo Wii exclusive, you can't really begrudge the perennial Disney mascot as he tries to scrape back some dignity, but while Junction Point's sequel is high on ideas, it fails to learn from the original's mistakes.

There's Oswald – the black-and-white star of yesteryear Disney animation – returning in the sequel as Mickey's cooperative multiplayer buddy and he's without a doubt the foremost gameplay boon. Possessing a more diverse skillset than Mickey (which really isn't saying a great deal), his abilities range from the Tails-like knack for flying really slowly towards the ground, dismembering appendages to use as a makeshift boomerang and a pocket-sized gizmo that charges electronic equipment.

What this does is expand the scope of puzzles *ever-so-slightly*. Now instead of Mickey just applying paint or thinner appropriately to phase objects in or out of existence, Oswald can activate switches, reach inaccessible areas and, well, activate more switches. Suffice to say it's not a

game that prides itself on complexity. But it's hard not to feel that the potential of the central pairing's respective mechanics is fundamentally wasted, and the game – much like its predecessor – doesn't quite satisfy on a gameplay level as it tries pander to both children and grown-ups. It *really* wants to be a Disney movie.

That much is glaringly obvious from the opening cinematic – a musical number that has the first game's antagonist returning to

It's hard not to feel that the potential of the central pairing's mechanics is fundamentally wasted

repent and offer his allegiance as a bigger bad approaches the denizens of the Wasteland. The game is sprinkled with similar song-orientated intermissions, but there's a heavy-handed approach to each descant that's high on exposition and short on Disney magic.

The game goes to great pains in an attempt to evoke classic Walt with a varying hit rate, from the colourless cow folk that wander aimlessly around the central hub, to the memorabilia that's littered around 2D

platforming excursions. The latter example proves to be something of a surprising highlight, not just because of all the curious oddities dredged from Disney's past but because of the sheer simplicity to the level design. These segments feel like an affectionate throwback to Mickey's 8-bit heyday (yes, that's a good thing).

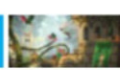
That's not to say that the 3D stages are without merit. The world is divided up into small areas to explore, each filled with no

end of arbitrary items to collect or find – Disney cash, Mickey ears and telephone boxes – and some decent, if wholly unoriginal, platforming

segments that make for the meat of the gameplay experience. The problem is that the world is so poorly constructed that you have little idea how each area connects, or even how you managed to get to where you are in the first place.

Despite such poor world design, there are some interesting ideas at work here, not least the cause-and-effect dynamic that has Mickey's decisions reverberated throughout the game depending on whether he paints or thins the world around him. Its implementation is basic – the premise not stretching beyond some superficial differences and varying character interactions – but it's still engaging enough to usher you towards the game's end.

And this might come as a surprise, but *Epic Mickey 2* is best played with someone by your side, not only to avoid the bumbling incompetency of an AI-controlled assistant, but also because it's just more fun with two of you. Every little element of the game has been designed with teamwork in mind, including enemies requiring a quick zap



▶ Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two



who's decided to grace us
ence.



☑ Pew! Pew! There's charm here, certainly, but it's underdeveloped.



SATURDAY MORNING TELEVISION

Stop gaming, start watching tv

INCLUDED AMONG THE excessive collectable items located across the Wasteland are film reels. "Film reels?" you may ask, "what could I have possibly unlocked finding these?" Well, classic Disney cartoons, of course. Idiot. There's some classic animated treasures here, featuring Walt's most beloved creations with nary a sign of the hilariously shameful Disney of old. Spector might have missed the mark with the story, but these short films are quite clearly the strongest tonal touchstones that influenced the developer during the sequel's production.



☑ You'll probably just go around erasing everything. It's just a lot easier that way.



☑ We're not sure whether Oswald's AI is dumb or perfectly replicating the mental capacity of a six-year-old.

of electricity from Oswald before Mickey can begin to cake them in paint. There are other examples where the game nudges the pairing to work closely together, and solo play therefore doesn't quite hold the appeal when the game is continually urging you to get a friend involved.

Although, we say friend, when what we really mean is a child. Not in a dodgy way, of course. The game doesn't possess the same whimsical appeal of the Lego gaming franchise, nor the depth to really sustain the interest of anyone looking for more than a simplistic platformer. But the puzzles lack the complexity to challenge anyone above the age of ten and fan service is so random and scattershot that it misses the mark for anyone it's aimed for.

The world of *Epic Mickey 2* is painted in broad strokes, then, and while its catch-all mentality might not always succeed, there's fun to be had even if everything feels angled more towards a younger audience. But we're not that young, and so *Epic Mickey 2* doesn't quite impress as much as hoped. Third time's the charm, eh?

David Scarborough

VERDICT

An old-school platformer that feels exactly that: old. *Epic Mickey 2* isn't going to challenge the vast majority of players, but Junction Point has done enough to make an engaging, if light, co-op platformer.

55%



☑ There is no image more horrifying than this. "Why won't the bad dreams stop, mummy?"



It's not clear how much input Rowling has had, but it certainly has her touch to it.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Wonderbook: Book Of Spells

Wand Direction

PS3 Before we go any further, it has to be said that *Wonderbook: Book Of Spells* is not software designed for 30-year-old videogame reviewers with scruffy facial hair and fading hairlines. It's a rather lovingly put together EyeToy and PlayStation Move combo that promises to bring the magic of Hogwarts to your PS3 just in time for Christmas, featuring words by JK Rowling herself, and tech by the splendid Sony London.

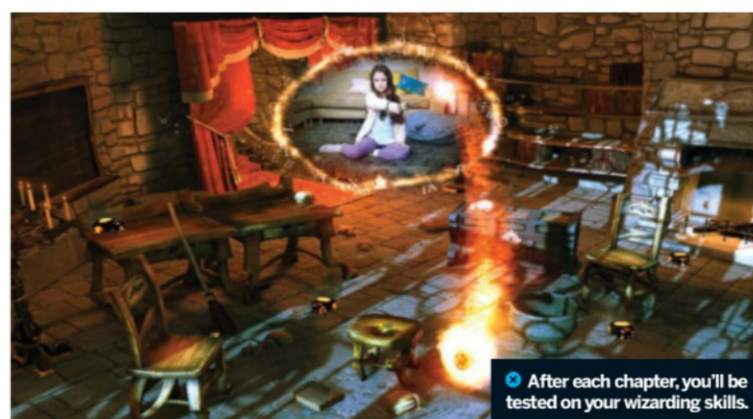
So, being said 30 year old, it made sense to let the child of the house have a go. Unfortunately, he's only 16 months old, so he trampled across the blue Wonderbook accessory, tried to eat the glowing part of the Move controller, laughed at his own face on the TV for about five minutes, then ran into the kitchen, grabbed a bag of dried pasta and emptied it all over the hall while hooting maniacally. Not a great help.

Thankfully, his mum is a diehard Potter aficionado, and we managed to combine our powers of technical knowledge and

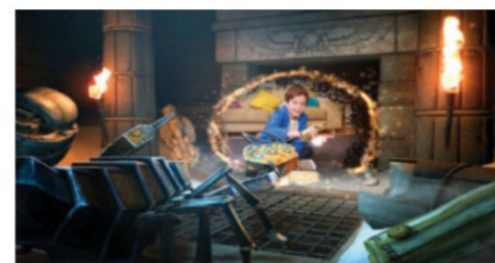
Hogwarts wizardry to spellbinding effect. The tech is actually really nice; your Move is transformed into a gnarled, wooden wand which can be used to levitate objects or shoot jets of water across the place in a pretty magical fashion. There are four chapters in *Book Of Spells*, each comprising multiple incantations, and every one is lavished with detail, artful storytelling and almost faultless tech. Levitating eyeballs and toads, warding off nasty roots, chanting weird spell names... it's all in here.

The production is fantastic, frankly. This is software designed for young Potter fanatics, probably around eight years old, and it brings a sense of spirit and warmth that's entirely in keeping with the Rowling universe. It's easy to sneer at stuff like this, so-called 'non-games', but it's better to think of *Wonderbook* as a Christmas toy rather than a videogame franchise in and of itself.

Quite where the tech goes after *Book Of Spells* has been exhausted is anyone's guess,



After each chapter, you'll be tested on your wizarding skills.



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Sony London
Price
£29.99
Players
1
Genre
Family
Age Rating
7+
Website
[wonderbook.
playstation.com](http://wonderbook.playstation.com)
Twitter
[@playstation](https://twitter.com/playstation)
Facebook
[www.facebook.
com/playstation](https://www.facebook.com/playstation)

really. It does feel like a one-off of sorts, a great seasonal product that doesn't really need any further add-ons despite the promise of next year's *Diggs Nightcrawler*, but should Sony choose to, there's potential for *Wonderbook* to turn into a nifty little platform of its own.

If nothing else, too, it confirms that Move is by far the best motion control device on the market, capable of some real wizardry of its own. Lovely.

Jon Denton

VERDICT

It's not for 'gamers', really, but it's so easy to admire. Unlike other EyeToy calamities, *Wonderbook* combines excellent tech with first-class production values to create a really splendid Christmas toy. If you've got a young Potter fan in the family, then this is pretty much essential.

80%



Each spell has a beautifully crafted diorama story to go with it.





Admittedly, some of the character designs verge on excellent.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Zone Of The Enders HD Collection

Jehuty calls for Konami's remastering department



DETAILS

Publisher
Konami
Developer
Kojima Productions
Price
£29.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Action
Age Rating
18+
Website www.konami.com/games/zoehd
Twitter @KonamiEU
Facebook facebook.com/konami.europe



There's something deliciously poetic about Konami bundling a new *Metal Gear* demo with an HD transfer of a game that was originally used as a vessel through which to sell a *Metal Gear* demo. Back in the day, Kojima's name wasn't widely enough known for a new IP to be sold off the back of that alone, but the chance to shove Snake around a tanker made the unknown quantity that was *Zone Of The Enders* that much more appealing.

But with this package bringing together both the glorified tech demo that is the original game and its glorious yet underappreciated sequel – both with a fancy new lick of polygonal paint, no less – we can only hope it's not the demo doing the selling this time around. The slick new anime intro tells you everything you need to know about the games, and as much as you're ever likely to understand about the story too, for that matter.

Mech combat is the order of the day, though it's a fluid and graceful strain that doesn't really exist outside of anime even to this day. Whether jetting around the sky spewing laser death at other extremely expensive robotic things or engaging in choreographed melee showdowns with rival Frames, Jehuty's antics

are stylish in extreme. That said, it's all fairly subdued in the original, with only a couple of mechs on screen at once – it was an early PS2 game, let's not forget – but the sequel ramps up the intensity within minutes, even if it's at the expense of frame-rate issues that apparently still haven't quite been ironed out.

While the original holds up better as a way of establishing the universe than it does on a gameplay level, the second game flips that on its head – it's a peerless action game in its field, though we'd wager there isn't a single person on the planet who actually know what is going on on a narrative level. But you simply won't care. The original has done its job of creating a world in which giant robots can fight scores of other giant robots and that's more than enough for the sequel to survive on its gameplay merits alone.

ZOE may feel like a proof of concept, spliced with Eighties mech anime pulled off an old VHS. But the second game both feels and now looks like it could have come out in the last few years. Whether you still harbour fond memories of the franchise or never played it back in the day, *Zone Of The Enders* is definitely worth another look, and the HD remaster team have done a sterling job. Oh, and did we mention the *Revengeance* demo? You'll want that too.

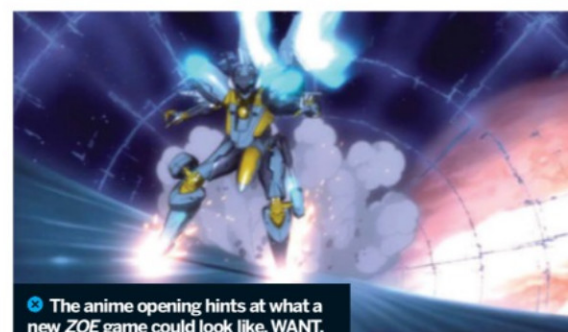
Luke Albigés

VERDICT

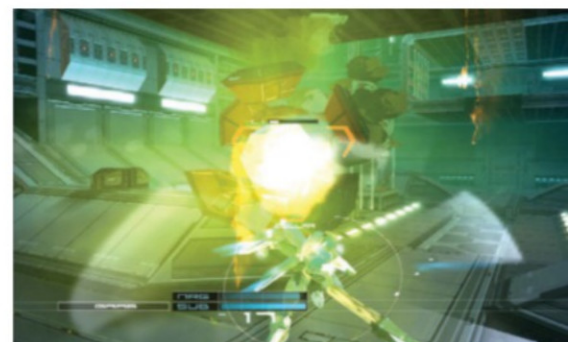
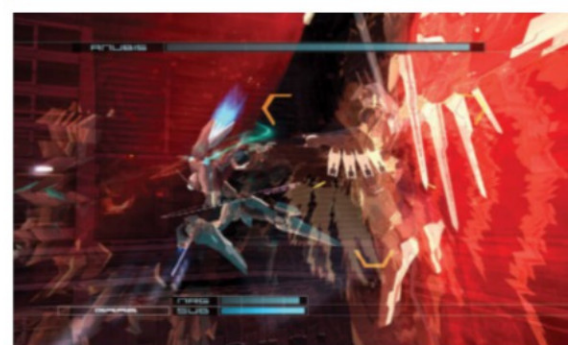
A decent debut and stunning sequel, brought up to date in commendable fashion by a team one step ahead of those churning out so many of the other 'HD' cash-ins. Worth picking up for the second game alone.

Hell, it's probably worth picking up for the demo alone. Awesome stuff.

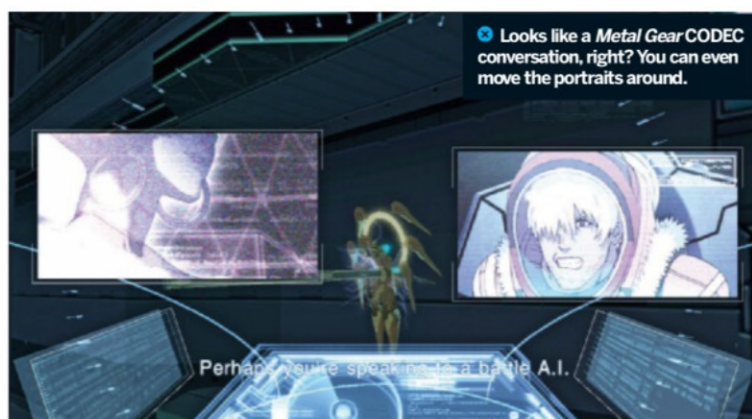
81%



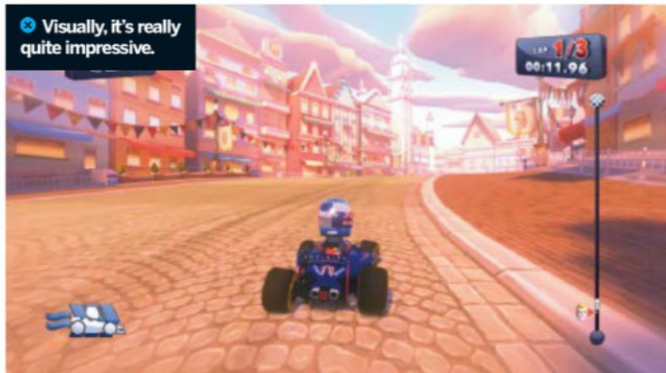
The anime opening hints at what a new *ZOE* game could look like. WANT.



A single attack button switches contextually between ranged and melee attacks.



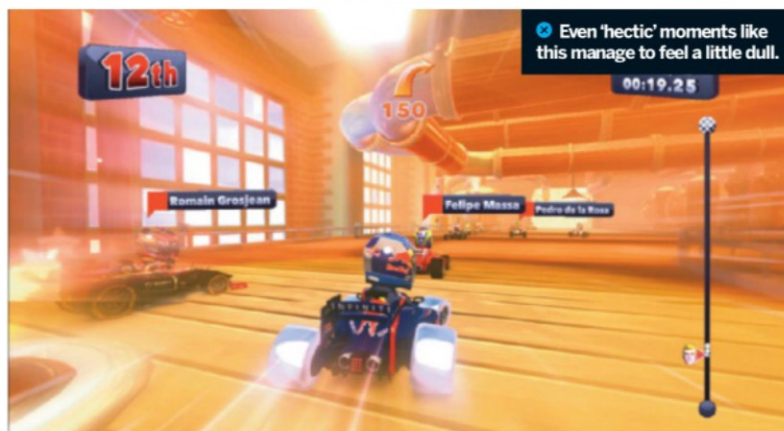
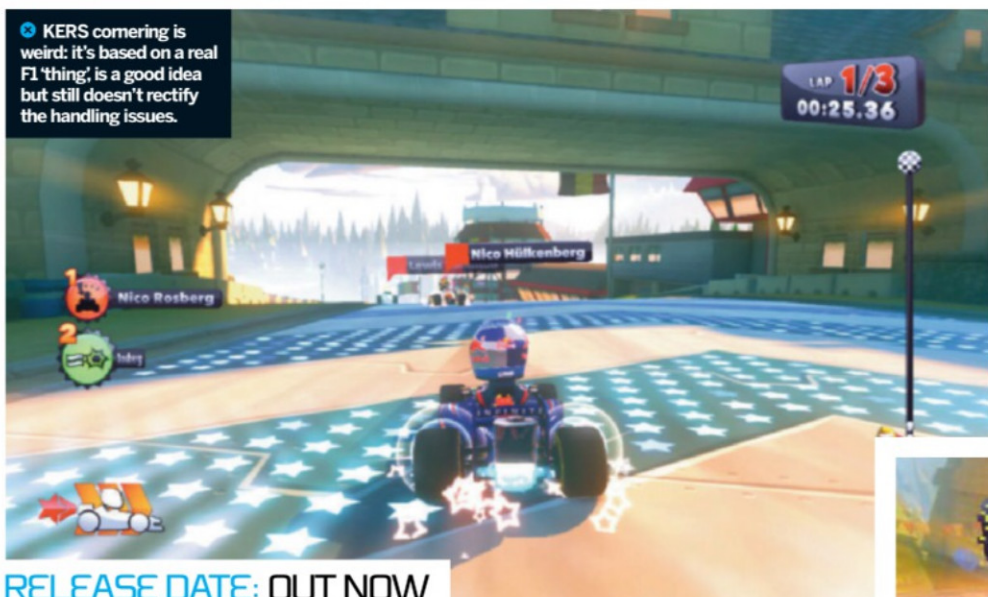
Visually, it's really quite impressive.



All your favourite F1 racers are here as cutesy, miniature versions of themselves. It's not awful, either.



KERS coming is weird: it's based on a real F1 'thing', is a good idea but still doesn't rectify the handling issues.



Even 'hectic' moments like this manage to feel a little dull.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

F1 Race Stars

Mario (Andretti) Kart



DETAILS

Publisher
Codemasters
Developer
In-house
Price
£39.99
Players
1-12
Genre
Racing
Age Rating
3+
Website
f1racestars.com
Twitter
@Codemasters
Facebook
[facebook.com/codemasters](https://www.facebook.com/codemasters)

PS3 You know the old adage: you wait ages for a karting game and then three come along at once. Or something like that, anyway. This year *LittleBigPlanet Karting* had pole position, *Sonic & Sega Racing Transformed* is the underdog bringing up the rear and then there's *F1 Race Stars* sitting slap-bang in mediocre mid-table.

It's about as mild a game as they come – even for a karting game – which is a shame when the initial promise of it really does make it quite interesting. Take the new 'innovative' features in slipstreaming and KERS boosting, for example. The former – though not unheard of in racing games – is pretty new for karting games and boosts your speed when behind another driver. It's a form of rubber-banding, sure, but one that you can benefit from too.

KERS, as race fans will likely know, is a fancy doohickey that goes inside a Formula One car for improving acceleration after sharp braking. With that in mind, its inclusion in *F1 Race Stars* does make a little more sense, as highlighted areas around certain

bends enable you to charge up an additional boost of up to three tiers when carefully controlling acceleration.

Then there's the power-ups themselves, some of which are your usual red shell/green shell guff and others that are a little more... respectful of the subject matter. Like the Safety Car pickup, a blue shell-style power-up that forces the player in first place to a crawl behind the pace car. Or the rain cloud that, as you might expect, covers the tarmac in slick pools of water.

It's unfortunate that such a reverence of Formula One should be *F1 Race Stars* downfall, then. The biggest problem is the handling, an element that should be of primary importance in any karting game. Where most let you hop and drift around sharper bends, *F1 Race Stars* has none of it: if you want to tackle some of the game's wackier tracks then you'll either have to ricochet off walls and hope you aren't

slowed too much, or brake yourself and recuperate afterwards. It's a huge detriment to the game as a whole, turning what could be an entertaining spin on F1 racing into a frustrating slog.

We like a lot of what *F1 Race Stars* does – honestly, we do – but if Codemasters wants to keep this interesting idea going it really needs to find out exactly what it wants the game to be. In the end, though, a karting game that is a pain to control is no karting game at all.

Adam Barnes

VERDICT

The biggest problem with *F1 Race Stars* is that it actually has the potential to be a fantastic idea. The honour it pays to the sport is great, but that's all for naught when the game itself is in need of a good bit of work.

61%



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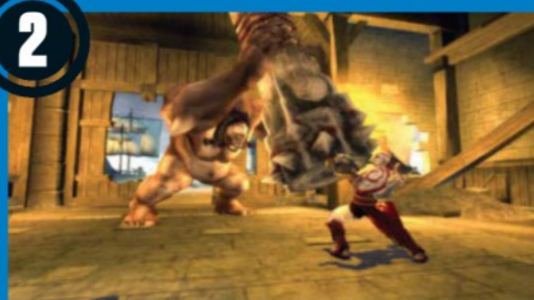


SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: PERSONA 3 PORTABLE

Price: £23.99

Wait for a sale on this one – it's frequently reduced on the store – as this is one of the most refreshing RPGs on the system, combining life sim elements with dungeon crawling. It's also beautifully-presented, and paves the way for its follow-up *Persona 4* arriving on Vita in early 2013.

2



GOD OF WAR: CHAINS OF OLYMPUS

Price: £14.99

The first time we were really blown away by the technical capabilities of the Vita, *Chains Of Olympus* is, for all intents and purposes, a full-scale console *God Of War* title on handheld. An ideal purchase for someone who needs a quick Kratos fix – there's bound to be a Vita-specific *GOW* title at some point...

3



HALF-MINUTE HERO

Price: £14.99

One of those great cult RPGs that the PSP became synonymous with (see also: *Tactics Ogre*, *Jeanne D'Arc*), *Half-Minute Hero* does what the title says: 30-second slices of RPG action. It's still the definitive version of the game, with Vita-friendly pixel art graphics.

4



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

Price: £11.99

Either of the *GTAs* work great on the handheld, but it's *Vice City Stories* that boasts the most functionality. It's still amazing when you consider just how much Rockstar managed to draw out of the PSP during its early years – plus, it's *Vice City*. Still amazing, even if you can get the game on a phone now.

5



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

Price: £15.99

It seemed like we were never going to get a classic *MGS* title on PSP, but then Kojima tackled perhaps the most ambitious instalment yet on that very handheld – if it's between *Peace Walker* and *Portable Ops*, the former wins hands down. Way too expensive right now, though: wait for a sale.

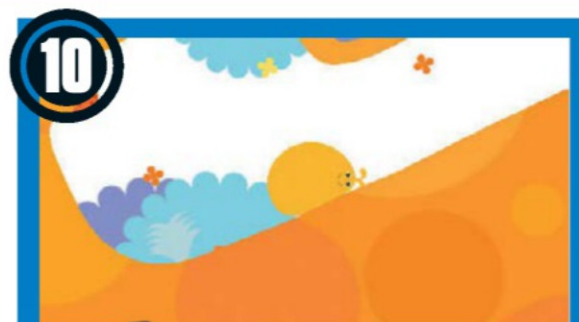


CHRISTMAS?

DOWNLOAD THESE TEN PSP GAMES

With backwards compatibility always on the rise for Vita, we pick out ten titles you must download now on the machine. Or wait for a price cut on them. That's good, too...

VITA



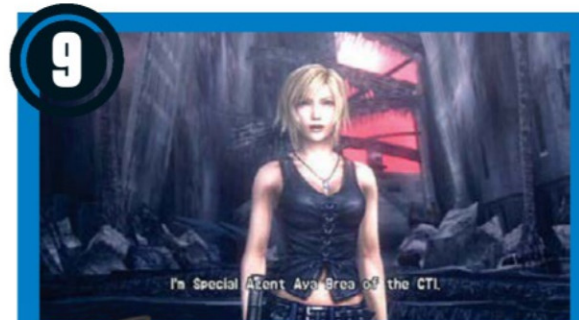
10



LOCOROCO

Price: £6.49

Ah, the PSP's first killer app. Built with the system clearly in mind, *LocoRoco's* use of the shoulder buttons to tilt the environment means it's still a great match for the Vita's interface. It's also so damned cheerful, with all those singing blobs that wedge together for transportation.



9



THE 3RD BIRTHDAY

Price: £15.99

A completely different way to do a third-person shooter, *The 3rd Birthday* is basically *Parasite Eve 3* (if you remember that excellent brace of PSone survival horror RPGs?), and pioneers a soldier possession mechanic that maintains a fast pace within the story (which is utter pump, by the way).



8



TACTICS OGRE: LET US CLING TOGETHER

Price: £15.99

Square Enix was very good to the PSP. Though it hasn't quite treated the Vita in the same way yet, it took a while to get started – and this beautiful strategy RPG, from the makers of cult hit *Vagrant Story*, represents the publisher at the peak of its handheld savvy.



7



DISSIDIA 012 FINAL FANTASY

Price: £15.99

A content-heavy action RPG collecting every *Final Fantasy* protagonist into one massive beat-'em-up, *Dissidia's* unique combat system is a high-end excuse for some excellent fan service, taking players across environments from every world in the illustrious series.



6



JEANNE D'ARC

Price: \$22.99 (US PSN)

Too expensive, and you'll need a separate memory card for US PSN purchases, annoyingly, but *Jeanne D'Arc* from *Rogue Galaxy* developer Level-5 is one of the PSP's great overlooked RPGs – Sony chose not to release it in Europe, but there's nothing to stop you picking it up.

TOP TEN PSN RETRO



1 Metal Gear Solid



2 Resident Evil 4



3 Okami HD



4 God Hand



5 Grand Theft Auto III



6 Final Fantasy IX



7 Streets of Rage 2



8 The Secret Of Monkey Island



9 Driver



10 Sonic The Hedgehog 2

Best of the best... don't mess with the best 'cos the best don't mess



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2



• Release date 29 September 2000 • Publisher Activision • Developer Neversoft
• Games it influenced SSX, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD, Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX, Spider-man series (no, really)

THE BIG ONE. The main event. Mr Wrestlemania. And (for once) we're not even on about Shawn Michaels. *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* is, simply put, one of the best games ever made. Yes, the third game was better. Yes, it's aged a bit and looks all weird and wibbly by today's standards. Yes, you can pretty much play it – sort of – in the HD remake we have on PSN. But this is it. This is where gaming became the stuff of legend. The stuff of endless anecdotes. The stuff of true, misspent youth. The stuff of Lagwagon's *May 16*.

The original *Tony Hawk's* brought back something that had been missing from contemporary gaming of the time, in the shape of score-based, competitive play. It would be dumb to claim that didn't exist elsewhere, but the first game really brought back that solid, pass-the-pad, arcadey feel of getting one up on

your mate. The second game refined it to such a degree that an entire generation was brought under its spell. Talk to anyone who was in their teens when *THPS2* came out and the chances are they played it. A lot. And if they didn't? Well then, they were idiots, and probably still are.

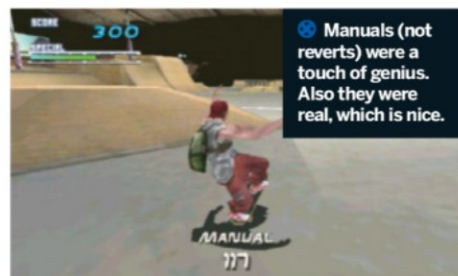
Away from the idiots, though, we had the experience of one of the best sequels ever made – adding to the game in enough ways to keep things fresher than fresh and building on what came before so as not to alienate those used to what came before. Also it had manuals. Wait, no – reverts. Or was it manuals? Oh, it had something (it was manuals, we know this, we're being hilarious). These little blighters were a double whammy of excellent, both being real and acting as perfect moves with which to string together *even longer* combos than you could first time around.

Oh, the combos. The lovely, wonderful combos. Those split-screen face-offs against

your chums where time would run out only for one player to still be midway through a combo, slowly creeping up on the score of their opponent until *bam*, they land it. And win. And cheering happens. And sadness happens. And punching happens. And people throw strops. Or, of course, you interrupted their combo and made them bail by slapping the pad out of their hands. But we'd never recommend doing that, not us, no siree.

One of our ranks saw Millencolin in 2011. The band played *No Cigar*. At that moment, hundreds of people – who were teenagers in 2000 – turned to their friends next to them and said, almost in unison: "It's the *Tony Hawk's* song!" And all was good in the world. That's why *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* is one of the best of the best.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 65 • 92%
"Best skater, bar none."



• Manuals (not reverts) were a touch of genius. Also they were real, which is nice.





Rule Of Rose wasn't actually that good, come to think of it.

NEVER COMING TO PSN #13

Rule Of Rose



- Release November 2006 (not released in UK)
- Developer Punchline

RULE OF ROSE seems like the ideal game to get a release on PSN – it wasn't great, but it's seen as a bit of an underappreciated gem in its own right. It never saw a UK release so has that added rarity and intrigue surrounding it, and the fact it's a psychological horror game (and you have a dog sidekick) makes it one of those you'd feel people can go back to and reappraise with a more considered take on the whole experience.

It's just... well, some people accused (and lied about) the game of having rather untoward elements – sexual elements involving minors, the goal of inflicting violence on a young girl, even mentions of rape. It was (mostly) untrue, but it didn't stop *Rule Of Rose* from having its reputation tarnished quite badly – Sony refused to publish the game outside of Japan and nobody bothered bringing it out in Britain just because of all the fuss. Would anybody bother with that hubbub all over again? Nah. No point. Waste of effort.

WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT

South Park



THERE IS A story of a young writer for **Play** who went to the shops the day this original *South Park* game came out. He wanted it, as he loved the show. He went to hand over his cash for it, and was stopped. Fearing it was because he was under age, he began to recite his made-up date of birth. But it wasn't that: it was the shopkeeper trying to warn the young buck off this game. "It's bad," he said, "you won't like it."

But he wasn't listened to, and the game was purchased anyway. And it was played. And it was not enjoyed. And it was taken back to the shop the next day, with the youngster hoping beyond hope he could somehow scam his money back. It was the same shopkeeper. "Told you you wouldn't like it," he smirked. The air was thick, the pause lasted forever, but finally he spoke again. "Don't worry though, you can have a refund."

And we never spoke of the original *South Park* game again.



PS2 CLASSICS REVIEW – NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED



Definitely not the most wanted entry to this particular series, ho ho



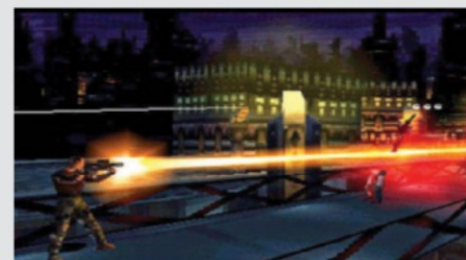
WE RECENTLY RANKED *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* as one of the best games on PS3, so it seems like we should serve warning that you shouldn't get it mixed up with this version available on PSN. Alright, the PS2 original is not terrible, but it is in no way anywhere as good as Criterion's wonderpiece. Wait, is wonderpiece a thing? Ah, it is now.

While made by a bunch of those lovely Canucks – folks who do understand things like irony and taste – the game suffers from an overreliance on 'cool' and 'street' and 'all those things we're not nor do we understand'. It's annoying. Granted, in **Play** 136 we might have given the game 87%, but we were nothing more than fools back then, blinded by our own idiocy.

Alright, maybe not idiocy. And we weren't wrong, because we're never wrong. Nor are we fools. But the new *Most Wanted* has totally changed everything about how we feel on the *Need For Speed* series. Why couldn't it always have been like this? Why did we have to put up with cool by committee? Why? Why? WHY?

Find out why next month.

RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



Apocalypse

We were on a bit of a Bruce Willis trip this month, so we thought it would be cool to gather together all the games he's appeared in and play them all. Then we remembered he's only been in *Apocalypse*, and that we couldn't be bothered.



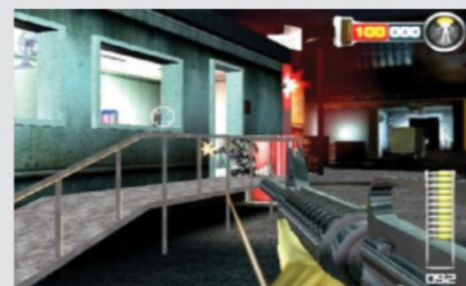
Die Hard Trilogy

So we moved on to the *Die Hard* games instead, because while they don't actually feature Willis, they are based on something he was in – and will be in again soon. Still, we didn't actually play it.



Die Hard Trilogy 2

Same for the sequel, which still confuses us as to why it exists. At the same time, it does go down in history as being the game on the cover of one of the best-selling issues of **Play** ever. Which is nice.



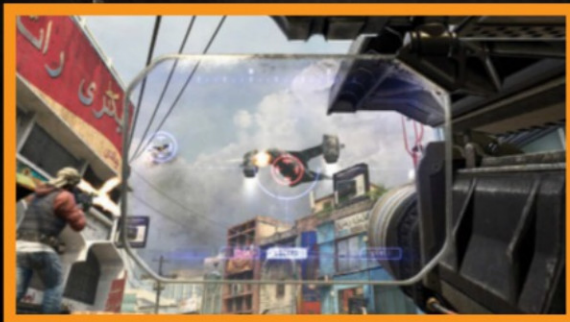
Die Hard: Vendetta

Oh crap, remember this one? Well, we would have refreshed our memories of it and regaled you all here with tales of how pump it is... but we just decided not to instead. Because who can be bothered?

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ARE BETTER AT BLACK OPS II THAN YOU. HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL? SAD? PATHETIC? INSIGNIFICANT? ALL THREE?

WELL WE CAN FIX ALL THAT WITH OUR HANDY GUIDE TO SURVIVING IN MULTIPLAYER

CALL OF DUTY BLACK OPS II



» POINTS MEAN PRIZES

The biggest change to the *Call Of Duty* multiplayer set up this year is the new Scorestreak system. Rather than relying on kills, you can earn your streak rewards through points – which makes objective-based modes more effective at unlocking these rewards.

It's important to remember this during each match so you know how best to proceed. In Domination, defending is just as important at capturing the points. You'll get 125 points for a defence kill, rather than the usual 50, so it can pay off to play for the objectives rather than just kills.



» HARDPOINT

This is the only real new mode in *Black Ops II*, so it's important that you know how to play it. It's basically a version of Headquarters, but with larger capture areas that are specifically tailored to each map.

You don't need to stay inside the area to collect points, however, so capture it then find a vantage point overlooking it. Once the enemy takes it you'll know there's someone in the general area, so check each of the entrances in turn before recapturing it for your team. Claymores and Bouncing Betties are particularly useful, too.

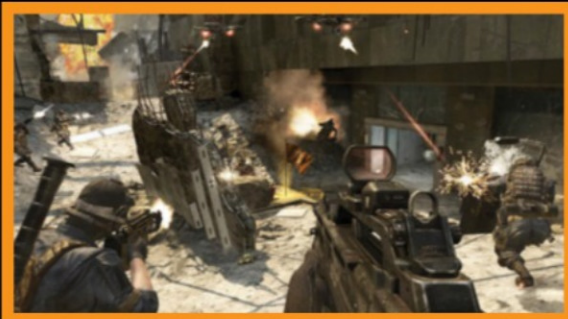


» KNIFE ATTACKS ARE SILENT

If you find yourself behind an enemy, you might be tempted to gun them down. But if you don't have a suppressor then shooting an enemy will make you appear on the map for all your enemies to see.

To avoid going loud, consider using your knife instead. It's rare that players will turn around to check their flanks – if they do just gun them down, you have the advantage – so if you can sprint up to them before they disappear around a corner, you can get a silent kill, keeping you good and hidden.

Call of Duty: Black Ops II

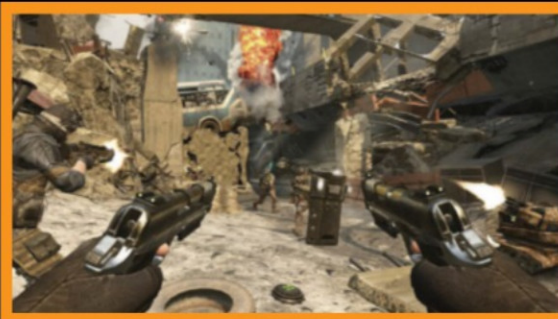


» SUPPORT ROLES

Thanks to the Scorestreak system, it's now possible to be the team player in *Call Of Duty* much more effectively. Sticking to support style Scorestreaks will earn you additional points, too.

UAV is the easiest of the lot, requiring only four kills worth of points (three with Hardline) to activate, rewarding you with ten extra points for any kills your team achieves during its activation period.

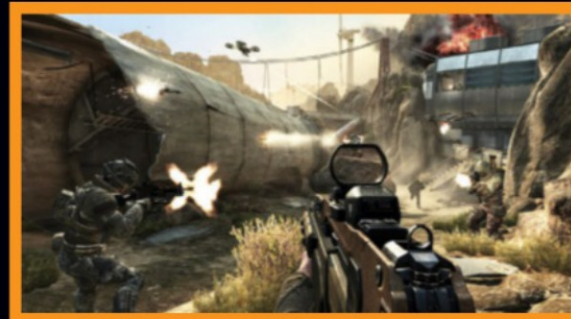
Other Scorestreaks, such as the two turrets, are particularly effective for building your score. Deploy the Guardian turret in a defensible area and each time an enemy runs into it you'll earn 25 points.



» PICK A FAVOURITE WEAPON

Changes to how attachments work from the original *Black Ops* means you probably won't want to regularly switch weapons. Each weapon you use has a separate experience level: use it more and you'll unlock additional attachments for it.

It depends on the type of weapon as to when an item unlocks, but in most cases the decent stuff is left until later. By all means try a new weapon when it unlocks – how would you have a favourite without doing so? – but sticking with one will be more rewarding in the long run.



» DON'T HANG AROUND

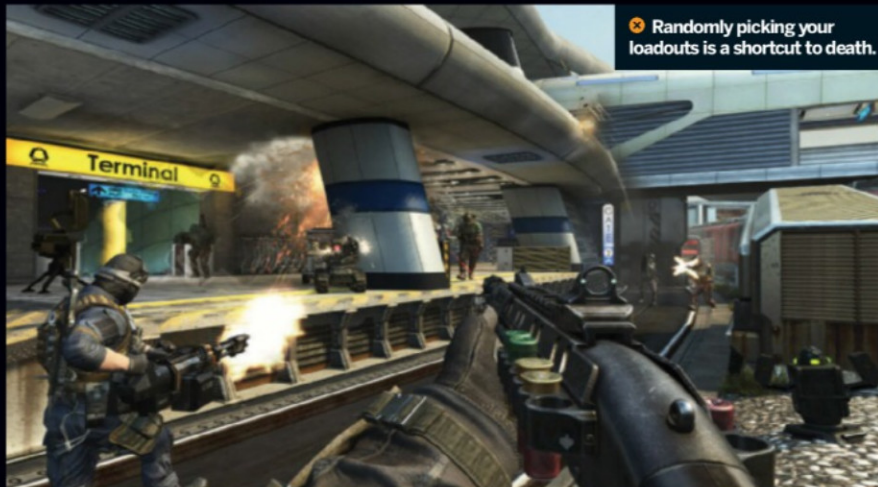
You won't unlock the Ghost perk until the very last level, 55, but even when you do, it no longer properly hides you from a UAV like in the first *Black Ops*. Stand still and a UAV will still pick you up, so it's important to keep moving.

Even without that perk, however, it's just good practice to keep on the move. This isn't *Battlefield*, the maps are smaller and if you stay in one place for too long the enemy will figure you out. If you like to use buildings as cover, pick two or three to alternate between to avoid becoming predictable. Kill two or three enemies, then move on.

⚠ Be conscious of the different points systems in this one.



⚠ Randomly picking your loadouts is a shortcut to death.



» CHANGES IN MAPS

A couple of maps are a little more dynamic than the others, and it's important to know how to use this to your advantage. Express, for example, will have a train speed through the station, crushing anyone caught in its wake. It'll last a while, so use the ruckus – and blocked path – to flank any enemies on the other side.

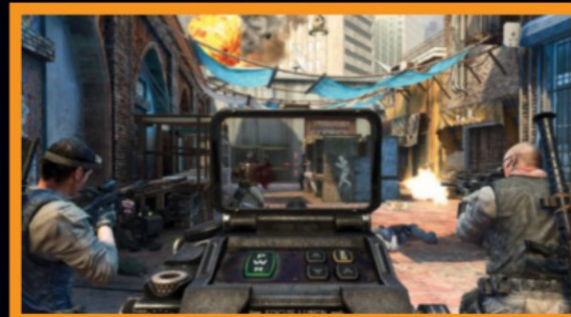
Cargo, on the other hand, has a series of crates in the centre of the map that are moved around by the crane above. Use this to kill enemies as it moves, and avoid using them as cover for yourself if at all possible. Knowing the pattern of certain areas can give you the advantage.



» HOW TO USE THE SHOCK CHARGE

This new tactical grenade acts like a concussion grenade, stunning players when they walk within proximity. Don't be tempted to use this like a grenade, however, the delayed detonation will make it awkward to use effectively in direct combat.

Instead use it to defend areas. Since the maps have many different routes around – which you should make an effort to learn – place one of these at an alternative entrance to ensure you've got your back covered if you're planning on hunkering down. Remember that Shock Charges can be placed on walls and ceilings too, so try to make them as inconspicuous as possible for better effectiveness.



» ADAPTABILITY

Scorestreak loadouts need to be customised according to the type of player, and while we've tried to cater something for everyone, *Black Ops II*'s class system really allows for some personal touches.

So while you might prefer to stay quiet, equipping suppressors and reducing visibility through perks, the equipment might change. Some maps, such as Hijacked, are far too small to manage with an LMG, so equip an SMG instead: you can still have the suppressor (in fact they unlock sooner). Create variations of your favourite loadouts and switch between them as your need changes.

PLAYLIST

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

TEAM PICKS HOLIDAY TIME-KILLING GAMES



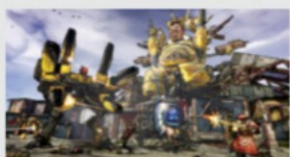
top five IAN DRANSFIELD

- 1 XCOM: Enemy Unknown
- 2 Hitman: Absolution
- 3 Borderlands 2
- 4 Zen Pinball 2
- 5 Metal Gear Solid HD Collection



top five SAM ROBERTS

- 1 Okami HD
- 2 PlayStation All-Stars
- 3 Derrick The Deathfin
- 4 Far Cry 3
- 5 Assassin's Creed III



top five ANDY SALTER

- 1 Borderlands 2
- 2 XCOM: Enemy Unknown
- 3 Dishonored
- 4 Hitman: Absolution
- 5 The Walking Dead



top five REBECCA RICHARDS

- 1 Final Fantasy VII
- 2 Borderlands 2
- 3 Fez
- 4 Rock Band Blitz
- 5 God Of War

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
007 Legends	225	44%
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	43%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed III	225	78%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
Assassin's Creed Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Borderlands	185	80%
Borderlands 2	223	90%
is an excellent lesson in sequel-making and is easily one of 2012's best games.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%

game	issue	score
Buzz!: Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Cars 2	208	68%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	204	72%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Sequel to one of the hardest games in recent times, Dark Souls is another superb release from developer From Software.		
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	223	78%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Worries: unfounded. Fun: lots of it. True Deus Ex experience: confirmed. Boss battles: bloody awful.		
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
Dishonored	224	92%
Stealth has never been so satisfying as it is in Dishonored. One of 2012's finest. Do the game a favour and play it sneaky.		
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Doom 3: BFG Edition	225	69%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%

game	issue	score
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Dogma	218	48%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
WARNING: The latest addition to Bethesda's superb franchise will seriously damage your social life.		
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
F1 2012	223	79%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
F.E.A.R. 3	208	60%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

007 Legends PS3	44%	PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale PS3 VITA	80%	Silent Hill: Book Of Memories VITA	32%
Assassin's Creed III PS3	78%	Sports Champions 2 PS3	65%	Killzone HD PSN	65%
Doom 3: BFG Edition PS3	69%	WRC 3 FIA		Okami HD PSN	90%
Hitman: Absolution PS3	93%	World Rally Championship PS3	75%	Sonic Adventure 2 PSN	69%
LittleBigPlanet: Karting PS3	85%	WWE 13 PS3	55%	The Unfinished Swan PSN	78%
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter PS3	72%	Assassin's Creed III: Liberation VITA	76%	Warhawk PSN	48%
Need For Speed: Most Wanted PS3	95%				

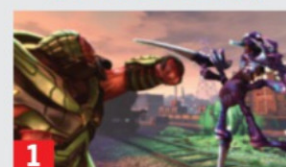
game	issue	score
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Hitman: Absolution	225	93%
It's still a bit rough around some edges, but there's no denying the scope, intelligence and passion poured into Hitman: Absolution.		
Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
Ice Age 4: Continental Drift: Artistic Games	222	40%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Inversion	220	49%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
LA Noire	206	91%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%

game	issue	score
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.		
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	85%
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Madagascar 3	224	39%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	223	86%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Anarchy (Import)	223	70%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Despite having an arguably disappointing ending, this BioWare RPG is still a must for any serious collection.		
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	72%
Medieval Moves	213	47%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
naïd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden:		
Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations	217	53%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	224	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%

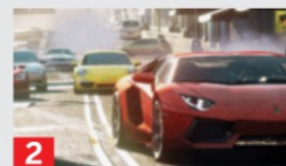
game	issue	score
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	225	95%
Need For Speed: Most Wanted is easily the best arcade racer of this generation. We absolutely love it.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
NHL 13	223	74%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	224	69%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixieJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	224	54%
Portal 2	205	95%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puma After Hours Athletes	214	58%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%

*denotes import review

TOP TEN OF THE YEAR



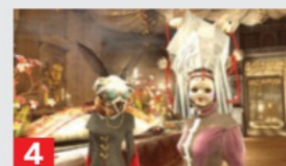
1 XCOM: Enemy Unknown



2 Need For Speed: Most Wanted



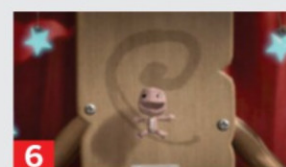
3 Hitman: Absolution



4 Dishonored



5 Borderlands 2



6 LittleBigPlanet Vita



7 Mass Effect 3



8 Zen Pinball 2



9 NBA 2K13



10 The Walking Dead

WE WISH WE HADN'T SAID THAT GAMES WE'RE WILLING TO REAPPRAISE



CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO

84% Play 156

There was another time... a darker time... when people working for **Play** might have placed value more on the person's name attached to the game than how it actually played. Fair enough that the reviewer believed *Jericho* was worth this score, but... well, it's not worth it. Because it's really not that good, unless you love Barker's work.



THE SIMPSONS GAME

82% Play 160

Similar to *Jericho*, sometimes people get a bit caught up on things that aren't necessarily the playing experience. Like how *The Simpsons Game* was genuinely funny and really captured the feel of the show. Fine, that's all well and good. But it sort of ignores the boring, bland game that was surrounded by all these wonderful *Simpsons* elements.



RAGE

60% Play 211

The more we reflect on the *Rage* score, the more we seem to think it was actually right on the money. It was a let-down, but it was still good fun in short bursts. But it doesn't stop us from thinking that maybe the fact the engine was nowhere near as good as we were promised might have coloured our judgement somewhat.



DRAGON'S DOGMA

48% Play 218

Startling revelation time: we didn't play *Dragon's Dogma* enough. From what we had played – including the severely limited (pre-release) online functionality – it was a 48% game. From what those in the office and around the world played afterwards, it was better than that. The review represented what we had access to, which wasn't the full picture, it seems. Oopsie.

game	issue	score
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	64%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rocksmith	223	78%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sleeping Dogs	222	80%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Sports Champions	196	83%
Sports Champions 2	225	65%
SSX	216	45%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8 Racing	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	222	77%
Tekken 6	184	94%
Tekken Hybrid	213	79%

game	issue	score
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	223	90%
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	224	55%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	217	70%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA Euro 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
Worms Collection	224	85%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship	225	75%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real II	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2009	173	74%

game	issue	score
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE 12	212	50%
WWE 13	225	55%
X-Blades	178	54%
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	224	94%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yoostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%

PS VITA LISTING



A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	225	76%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
LittleBigPlanet	223	93%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
New Little King's Story	224	70%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
Puddle	222	82%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories	225	32%
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
WipEout 2048	215	87%

PS STORE LISTING



1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arc The Lad	215	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baconing	210	72%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%

game	issue	score
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	16	79%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	168	70%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Counter-Strike: Global Offensive	223	89%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubix HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Deus Ex	219	83%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
Driver	171	90%
Droplitz	184	91%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
Elefunk	170	45%
Euforia	212	85%
Explodemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
f!Ow	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
From Dust	211	82%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
G-Police	27	84%
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
God Hand	216	83%
Gotham City Impostors	216	78%
Grand Theft Auto III	224	90%
GTA III shuffles onto the slowly growing list of PSN classics, and still illustrates why Rockstar's original 3D take on the series was so influential.		
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%

game	issue	score
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
I Am Alive	217	64%
inFamous Collection	224	85%
inFamous: Festival Of Blood	212	76%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Journey	216	87%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Jurassic Park: The Game	214	32%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Killzone HD	225	65%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Limbo	209	90%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	70%
Marvel vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor: Frontline	210	52%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
NBA Jam: On Fire Edition	212	64%
Nights Into Dreams...	224	75%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Okami HD	225	90%
Okami is lovely, just as we remember it, and has been given a treatment that takes it far beyond the muffled visual quality of the PS2 original.		
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%

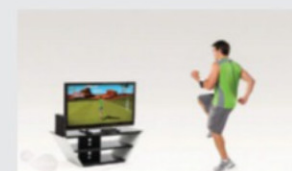
game	issue	score
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimension	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Rayman 3 HD	217	77%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rock Band Blitz	223	80%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	195	92%
Section 8	193	78%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
The Simpsons: Arcade Game	216	54%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic Adventure 2	225	69%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode I	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode II	220	40%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles In Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tokyo Jungle	223	81%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	223	73%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topota: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%
Under Siege	207	71%
The Unfinished Swan	225	78%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
The Walking Dead: Episode 1	219	89%
The Walking Dead Episode 2	221	90%
The Walking Dead: Episode 3	223	86%

PS3'S BEST GAMES EA SPORTS ACTIVE 2 81%, PLAY 200

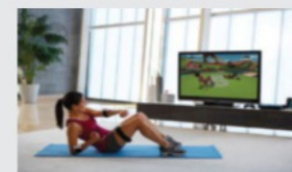
Never before did a game have a direct impact on the physical wellbeing of a member of the **Play** team. Not until *EA Sports Active 2*, at least. When erstwhile **Play** God Ian wanted to lose weight, he turned to EA's fitness 'game'.



Spurred on by EA's publicist, who demanded Ian send the copy of the game back because he didn't immediately get to work losing weight, the writer got off his then-fat arse and set about jogging in front of his television.



And wouldn't you know it, it worked. Three months of exercise made a dramatic impact – which shouldn't be a surprise to anyone with a brain, but you know, some people are thick and all that.

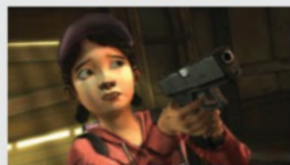


It was still vaguely surprising, as you do sort of expect these fitness games to err more on the side of the 'game' part than the genuine fitness angle. We're all cynical and critical like that, because we're a shower of jaded bastards.



But – especially with its price being about £7 everywhere – *EA Sports Active 2* is still a fine fitness *thing* to pick up. It's cheaper than a gym membership, you don't have to leave the house and you can lose weight. Huzzah!

DOWNLOAD THESE 2012'S BEST EDITION



THE WALKING DEAD

Various%, Play various
So, so good. No game in the last... well, ever, has made us feel like *The Walking Dead* has. Every choice matters and has to be made on instinct, and every decision you make will stick with you. Harsh, and incredible.



QUANTUM CONUNDRUM

90%, Play 221
It's effectively a spin-off of *Portal*, sure, and it's great, of course, but the best thing about *Quantum Conundrum*? The voice of your uncle in the game played Q on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Also Desmond's dad on *Assassin's Creed*, but nobody cares about that.



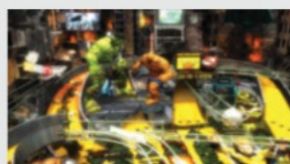
JOURNEY

87%, Play 216
Journey is a one-of-a-kind game and the sort of thing that makes people who don't care about games care about games. Also it's pretty and nice and makes you feel good and other stuff like that that's important.



VELOCITY

N/A%, Play N/A
What the hell do you mean we didn't review *Velocity*? Which idiot allowed this? Have them fired immediately. It's brilliant – the best Mini out there – and worth about, saaaay... 88%. Buy it. Or we'll fire you too.



ZEN PINBALL 2

90%, Play 224
This is like the 30th time we've mentioned this in this month's Playlist. You know what? We're not even sorry. It's really good and we're likely to still be playing it long after Ian is dead (he died this month [he's not dead]).

game	issue	score
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk	225	48%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipEout	01	89%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Wonder Boy In Monster Land	220	50%
Worms	179	91%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
Worms: Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yars' Revenge	206	57%
Zack Zero	215	73%
Zen Pinball 2	224	90%
The finest pinball game we've seen in a long time, but in a newer, shinier, updatedier fashion. Yay pinball!		
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP LISTING



The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bomberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
The Con	153	59%
Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
The Cube	153	64%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Fate/Extra	219	60%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%

*denotes import review

game	issue	score
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy III	224	44%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Gladiator Begins	206	52%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
The Godfather: Mob Wars	136	66%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
The Legend Of Heroes: Trails In The Sky	214	75%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
LocoRoco	143	94%
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
MediEvil: Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
Moon Diver	205	46%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Persona 2: Innocent Sin	214	65%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%

game	issue	score
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCroIS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds	205	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable	206	78%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
The Sims 2	137	71%
Slam Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
SoulCalibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Swarm	204	78%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%



ANDY SALTER

WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?):

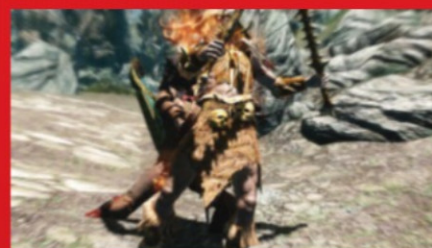
SKYRIM

WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?):

Because I can, damnit, and you can't stop me

FOR THE PAST year I've been following the same gorram routine: get home, put *Skyrim* on and escape reality. As a fantasy RPG, it keeps on giving, offering so much scope in the way you can exist within that incredibly rich fictional universe. I've played it for over 400 hours, lest we forget, the time it would take to do far more useful things, like fitting a new sink or cutting down a tree. Forget trees: *Skyrim* is better. Because I say so.

Anyway, Bethesda quite obviously hit it out of the park, even though the continued absence of DLC for the game on PS3 really gets my goat. But as I sit here, stroking my beard and hoping for a better tomorrow, one thing keeps returning to me again and again: you can play this game forever. Even without DLC, could you even have dreamed back in the PSone days that something this good would one day come along? Yet here I am, with my pretend life in that other world, that means just as much to me as the one I live now. Well, sort of. I like reality as well, but living in the purgatory-esque town of Boscombe really encourages escapism.



PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

2013 is upon us! While we get excited about that, here's what's been tickling our disc drives recently



SAM ROBERTS

WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?):

ASSASSIN'S CREED III: LIBERATION

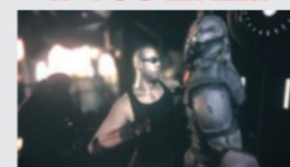
WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?):

I own a PS Vita

RETURNING TO PLAY meant that picking up a PS Vita was only natural, as I settle back in to the ways of PlayStation (not that I ever left). To those who say there's nothing to play on Vita – not you, dear reader, of course – I say this: get out. Vita had a solid Christmas between a great port of *Need For Speed*, *LittleBigPlanet*, *PlayStation All-Stars* and *Ratchet Q-Force*, but it's *Assassin's Creed III: Liberation* I'm most taken with right now. It's a great holiday game, perfect to sink a lot of time into when you're too full of food or anti-social to hang out with your family ("I'm not cooking, dad, I moved out five years ago! You cook for me now! I'm playing PS Vita" etc).

Liberation is an *Assassin's Creed* game in a glass bottle, in some ways, like that city Kandor from *Superman* comics. It's a microcosm of what a full *Assassin's Creed* game is, but at the same time doesn't feel like the arbitrary handheld spin-off – just an excellent match for the hardware. This represents the kind of approach Sony should take towards publishers with high-end properties on PS3: just find the right middle ground for the Vita. Sure, we'd prefer to have the exact games replicated for on the go, but something tailor-made feels pretty special too. Looking ahead, with *Persona 4* in the offing for the console, the Vita has a healthy year coming up as publishers figure out exactly what they should be doing with the thing.

PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LIKE...



Vin Diesel

PLAY: CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

Some say Vin Diesel can't act, but they clearly haven't seen *Find Me Guilty* in which a fat Vin Diesel acts really well. Oh, he's in this really good game from Starbreeze too, which you should definitely look up if you haven't already.



More Vin Diesel

PLAY: WHEELMAN

We totally forgot to say in that bit about *Chronicles Of Riddick* that Vin Diesel is good in *Chronicles Of Riddick* (and *Pitch Black*) too. Sure, he doesn't do much, but he brings Riddick to life in a way few others could. We love Vin Diesel. Oh, *Wheelman* is overlooked too.



Realising nostalgia is a crock

PLAY: DOOM 3: BFG EDITION

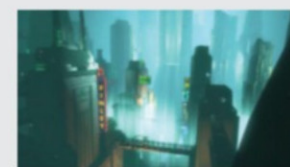
"Hey the past ha ha! Yeah!" No. Be quiet. Nostalgia clouds judgement. Your brain naturally blurs history to make it better than it was at the time. It has to do this, or you'd go mental. Then you play *Doom 3* and go "Oh. The past."



Lying

PLAY: R.U.S.E.

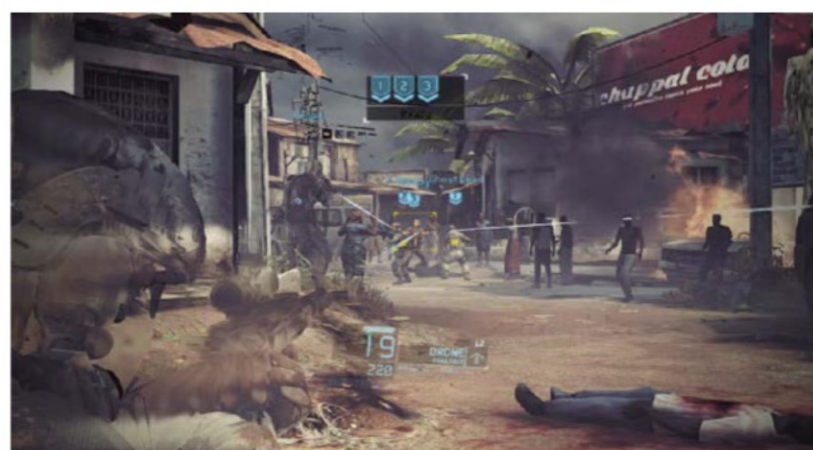
Does anyone remember *R.U.S.E.*? Well you should, because it was a really good fun RTS on console – something that never happens now. And that's all your fault for not buying it. Hah, we're lying. It's not *all* your fault. Just mostly.



No accusations, just friendly crustaceans

PLAY: BIOSHOCK

Explain: We're well pumped up for *BioShock Infinite* now, so we're going back to the old games. The first one is still magical and the second one is a damn fine game, arguably better than the first in many ways. Oh yeah, it's under the sea. SIMPSON'S REFERENCE.



GHOST RECON: FUTURE SOLDIER



WHAT WE SAID

PLAY 219
"There's immense satisfaction in pulling off a synchronised takedown of four targets, and there are times when you aren't being blanded to death. But those moments are all too fleeting, and soon enough you wake from the brief euphoria... It's better online though, naturally."

60%
79
out of 100
metacritic

WHAT OTHERS SAID

OOH, CLANCY THAT! THE MUCH-DELAYED GHOST RECON SEQUEL CAME AND WENT WITH A BIT OF A WHIMPER, RATHER THAN A DRONE-POWERED BANG...



GERAINT DAVID REES A far cry from the brilliance of the *Advanced Warfighter*. On rails campaign and a god awful *COD*-based multiplayer.

PHIL ROBINSON I could see right through it! Geddit "ghost" hee hee me sooo funny! lol

SANDY STRACHAN *GRFS* had the right idea, objective-based modes no TDM. It was let down by not having dedicated servers and bad match-making system. The match-making system fractured the player base, it's also a shame nobody really plays the DLC modes.

NATHAN JOHNSON Really enjoyed it.

TERI OTIS REDDING Loved *GRFS* & *Raven Strike* DLC.

ARTHUR SCROGGINS Dumbed down compared to the previous outing and catered too much to the *COD* crowd.

DAVID GRAY Shite, put that in the mag.

GEORGE THORNEY I was one of the beta testers for Ubisoft and thought it was great. I loved how cinematic it was.



@OLISMITH93 An interestingly cinematic approach to the series, that shook things up in all the right ways.

@ELITESACKBOY I didn't buy it. Got put off by its genericness, if that's even a word.

@MCKIRK It was great! Once I spawned outside of the map and shot everyone in the feet for the whole match.

@LINK064 Dull, uninspired, disjointed and repetitive. Wasn't impressed with anything bar the novelty of gun smith.

@CLEVECHRIS They have terrible 3G coverage! Stray too far from the battlezone and the screen goes fuzzy! :)

@SIRRODDERS Single-player was decent, multiplayer was connection and lag hell on PS3 so couldn't play it and had to trade. Missed old *GRAW2* type co-op.

@HANKBIZZLE It was decent but it just felt like I'd played it all before.

@FENIXII It's good but hasn't been tested EVER. So many bugs and freezes. Not to mention crappy servers.



Post-Mortem

As usual **Play** was painted as The Enemy Of Fun for its 'harsh' mark on *Future Soldier*, but once again time has proven our ally and vindicated the score. It was always a positive 60%, we were never really down on the game. But since its release and some initial surprise at the game being more accessible – and so more people getting into it at first – there's been no follow-up reaction on it. *Future Soldier* is not an enduring game. It is not a game people remember, and it only came out in May. Head to most online retailers and it can be snapped up for about £15 (or your local equivalent, of course), and at that price it might actually be worth a punt – especially if you can get a few mates to grab a copy too so you can play online.

But beyond that, what has *Future Soldier* done for gaming? Nothing. How much fun has it brought? Not much. How many people talk about it on a daily basis? About three. It's by no means a bad game, but history has proven us right once more: it's a game nobody really cared about.

PLAY

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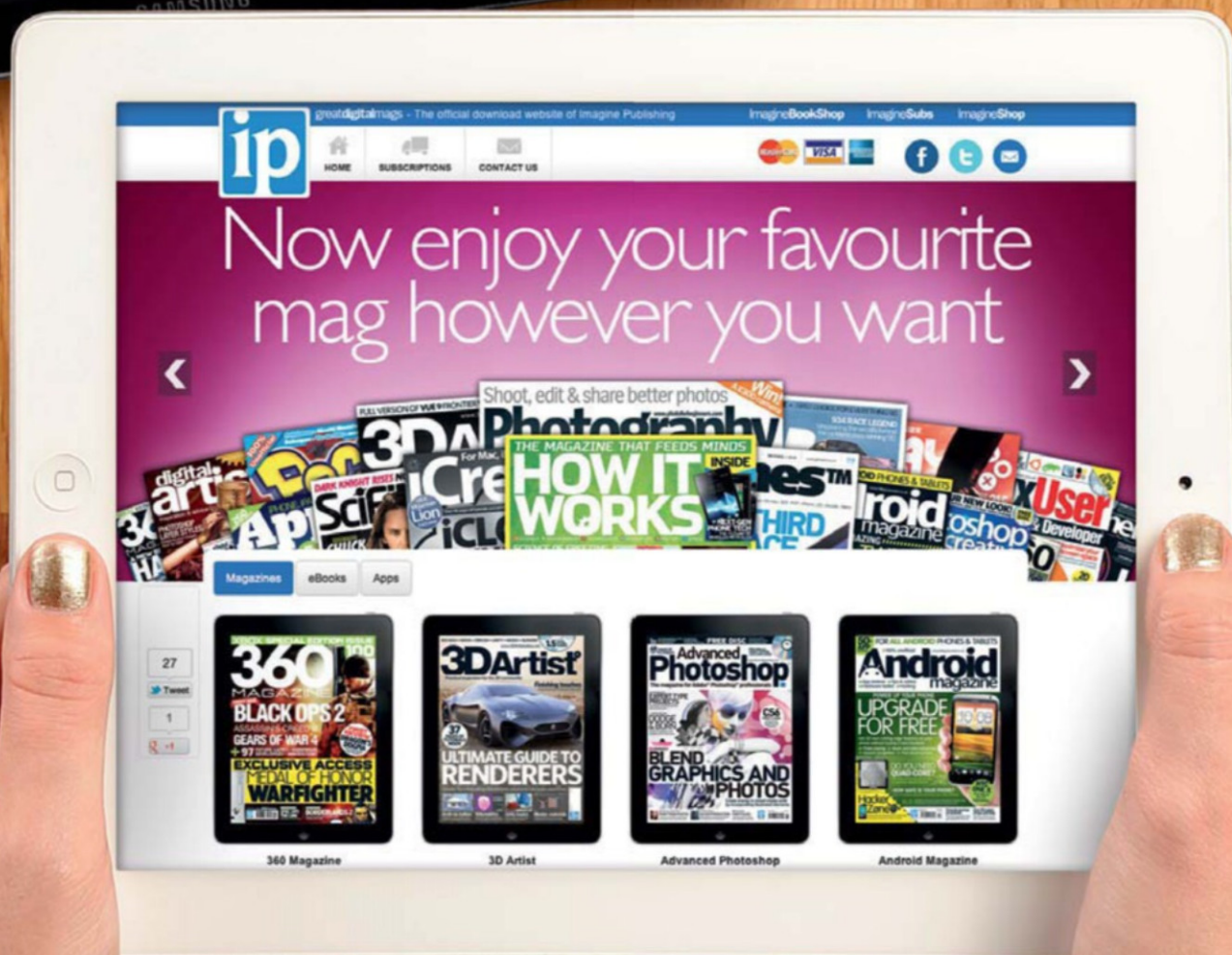
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